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Beat

#221 | 06-2024

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▸ SYNTORIAL PRIMER 2*
UNIVERSAL GENIUS FOR EDM & TRANCE

▸ ZAMPLER LIQUID D&B*
91 PADS & BASSES FOR SPHERIC DRUM & BASS

*Only while stocks last. Online registration required.

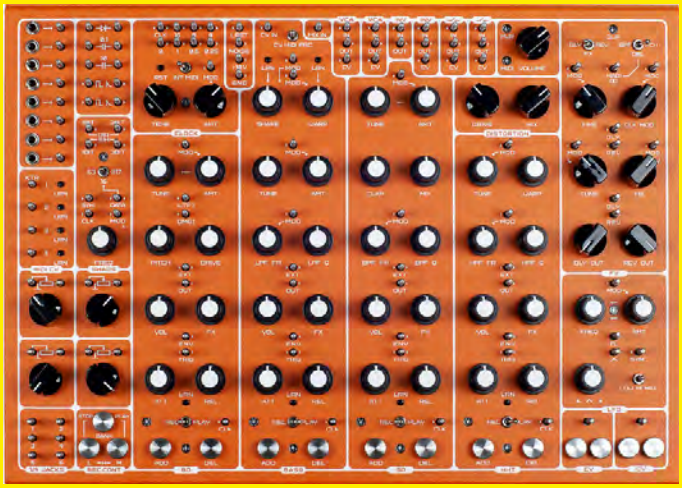
TO THE MAX:
7,6 GB Loops, Stabs & Guitars for Disco, Ambient & House

HOW IT WORKS – HOW IT HELPS

STREAMS & SPOTIFY

FROM YOUR STUDIO TO THE PLAYLIST
HOW MUCH YOU EARN WITH IT

KAOSS REPLAY MULTI-FX & SAMPLER



PODCAST
IN TALK WITH DAVE CLARKE

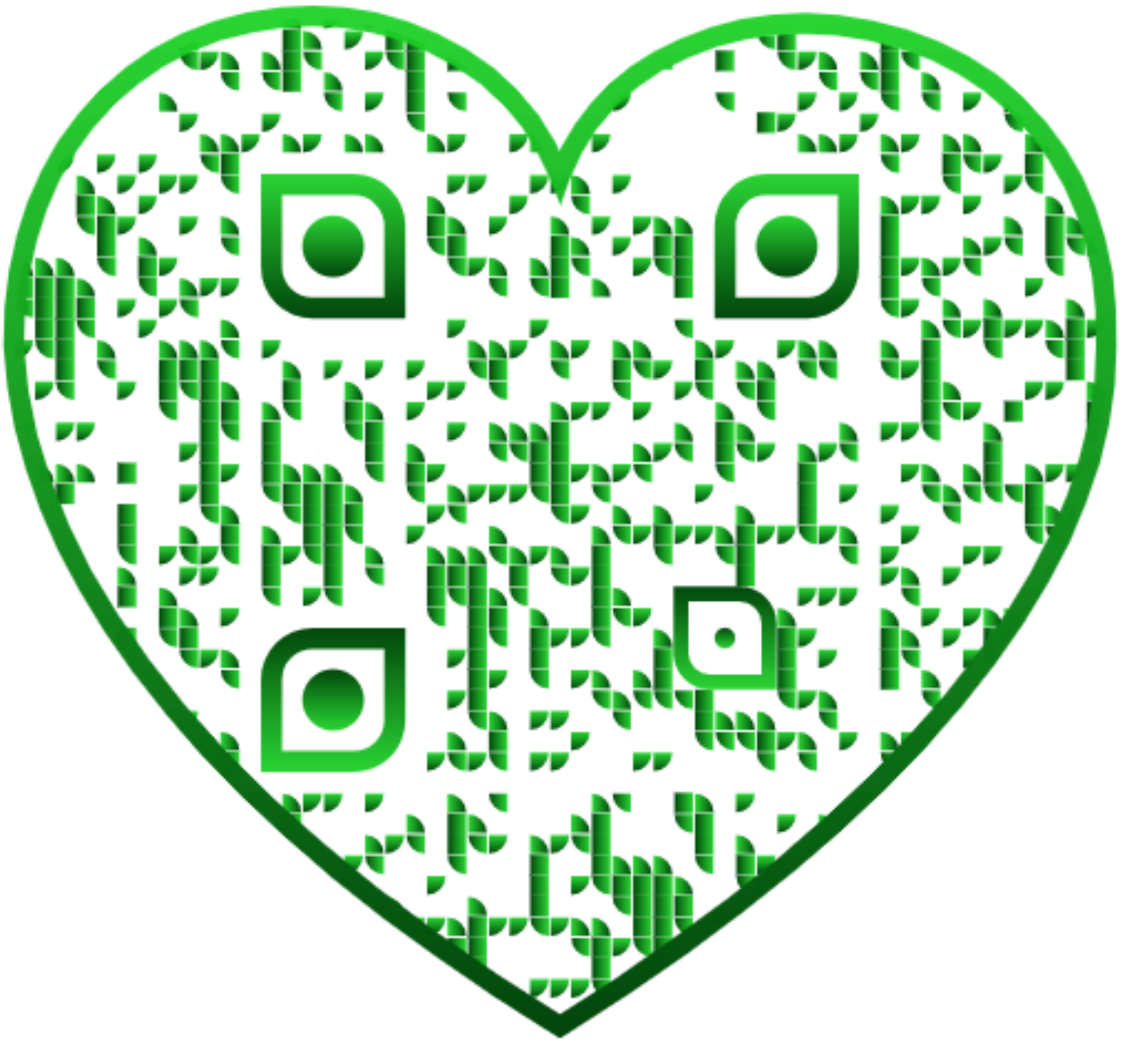
TEST: SOMA PULSAR-23
AGGRESSIVE 4 TRACK DRUM SYNTH

HANDS-ON: FL STUDIO
THE TRICK FOR SHINING VOCALS

WORKSHOP
WINDOWS 11 ON YOUR MAC

TESTS ARTURIA KEYLAB ESSENTIAL 88 MK3 | BLACK LION REVOLUTION EXP | HEXINVERTER VCNO | QU-BIT MOJAVE

D 6696 ATY 306 CH 20.90 JPY 6206 AUX



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GET STARTED

SOFTWARE-HIGHLIGHTS

Synth- & Vaporwave master
RetroMod Digital 1

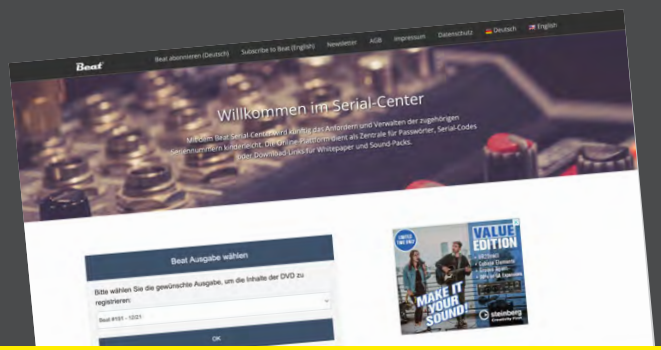
The PPG Wave series, Korg's DW series and the Prophet VS ... friends of the dazzling synth sounds of the 80s are sure to get bright eyed at these names. These hybrids with digital oscillators and analog filters are legendary for their flowing pads, harsh basses, metallic electric piano sounds and sawing leads. Experience their magic anew with RetroMod Digital 1!

Download: see page 9 | Info: tracktion.com win | mac

Versatile genius for EDM & Co.
Syntorial Primer 2

At first glance, the Syntorial Primer software synthesizer appears somewhat inconspicuous. But if you take a closer look, you quickly realize how flexible this virtual-analogue sound generator is. Its sound spectrum ranges from classic analog Basses, Leads, Pads and effect sounds to contemporary sounds for electronic music and club productions. Curious? Then install it and off you go.

Download: see page 9 | Info: syntorial.com win | mac



All serial numbers safely accessible:
The Beat Serial Center

To ensure that none of your serial numbers are lost in the future (for instance, in the event of a new installation, Outlook crash or disk crash), you can now conveniently manage them online. The advantages are obvious: The editorial team can send you targeted software updates, you have access to all serials at any time and from anywhere, and everything is managed and stored in a central location. The Serial Center thus becomes your personal password archive on the web.

www.serialcenter.de

91 pads & basses for spheric Drum & Bass
Liquid D&B for Zampler & MPCs

Liquid Drum & Bass has been there since forever – and still is one of the top notch genres of broken beats, for listening, dancing and floating all at once. This pack, compatible with Zampler and your MPC, offers a total of 91 fluid pads, growling basses, soulful chords and crystal bells, creating that relaxed feeling in an instant. If you love Hospital Records, Fokuz, Shogun and Liquicity or artists like High Contrast, LTJ Bukem and Etherwood, this one's the perfect fit for you!

Download: see page 9 | More packs: zamplersounds.com win | mac

Beat #221 – Exclusive software
Over 13 GB of valuable plug-ins and samples to download

7,6 GB

7,6 GB with Loops, Stabs & Guitars for Ambient, House & Disco

The perfect symbiosis of futuristic EDM sounds and the enticing nuances of first-class analog synthesizers is provided by our two full versions Syntorial Primer2 and RetroMod Digital 1, which complement each other perfectly. This promises an incomparable journey through the world of electronic music.

For fans of cultivated spherical Drum & Bass, we have the Liquid D&B expansion pack with over 1,000 samples for our Zampler. Growling basses, soulful chords and crystal-clear bells are the focus here.

The more than 7 GB sample archive radiates a banging House, Tech House, Deep House, Bigroom and Techno vibe, taking your club productions to the next level. Included are packs from Prime Loops, SampleMagic, Sounds to Sample and ZTEKNO. In addition, the beats from LabelSampler3 by Function Loops will blow through your speakers. Impulse responses from reverb legend Bricasti M7, glitch refills and guitar loops round off the brilliant variety of sounds.

Contents compiled by the Beat editorial team

Blaukraut Charlatan 3

Thanks to its 7-fold unison, the Charlatan 3 synth behemoth is bursting with the power of fat sounds for electronic music, but it can also be used for sound design. Two oscillators with freely drawable waveforms, versatile multimode filters, a powerful modulation section and sophisticated effects make Charlatan 3 indispensable in the studio.

Download: see page 9 | **Info: blaukraut.info** win | linux

DSP56300 Osirus

Experience the sound of the synth legend Access Virus. Numerous factory presets of the Virus are immediately available in the open source emulation Osirus. Crisp plucks and leads as well as powerful basses are waiting for you. Various tabs for filters, modulation and effects are available for sound programming. Indispensable for trance and hands-up lovers!

Download: see page 9 | **Info: dsp56300.wordpress.com** win | mac | linux

Exclusive download:
The Beat Studio

2,6 GB

Liquid D&B for Zampler & MPCs

Apsonic Speedrum BE

Powerful drum sampler with 16 MPC-style pads

Acon Dynamics BE

All-rounder with Compressor, Expander and Gate

Thorn Solo

One of the best and most flexible monosynths out there

Zampler//RX

REX/SFZ Player with mod-matrix & param sequencer

Halls Of Fame 3 Beat

Luxury convolution reverb with Lexicon, Bricasti & EMT

Digital Systemic Emulations Awesome Piano

Normal is boring, which is why the sample-based plug-in Awesome Piano from Digital Systemic Emulations offers 1855 samples with broken, dissonant piano sounds. Ideal for experimental music and sound design.

Download: see page 9 | Info: plugins4free.com win

KBrown Synths CS78q

KBrown Synths has developed the CS78q polyphonic analog synthesizer as an emulation of Yamaha's classic CS80 synth. Look forward to rich basses, buttery pads and vintage leads.

Download: see page 9 | Info: kbrownsynthplugins.weebly.com win

Ardura Actuate

Actuate is a multi-talent for your studio. It not only includes a sampler and granulizer, but also a synthesizer behind the open source solution. Perfect for stretching, pitch shifting and granulation.

Download: see page 9 | Info: kvraudio.com win | mac

MNDALA 2

For extreme sound manipulation, the sixfold sampler MNDALA 2 is the perfect expert. Program complex sequences with up to 128 steps and alienate the sounds with up to five effects per sampler.

Download: see page 9 | Info: mntra.io win | mac

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STREAMS & SPOTIFY

Streaming services have long since revolutionized the way we consume music - and they don't stay out of the headlines. But which platforms are the most important for music creators and podcasters? How do you place your tracks successfully, how do you increase your popularity and why does your sound have to be featured in Spotify and Apple playlists? Look forward to our big special, in which we provide all the answers about streaming and also show you how and where you can ultimately make sales with streams! **From page 18**

Test: SOMA Pulsar-23

Pulsar-23 is a drum synthesizer with 23 modules that stands out with its fat analog sound. **Page 64**

Standards

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Make your studio more valuable! This month there's more than 13 GB of plug-ins, sounds and samples for your tracks.

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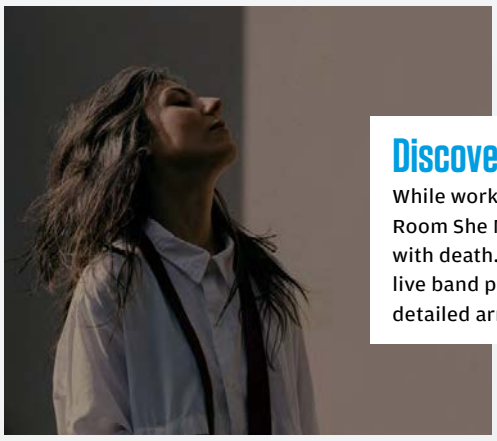
With his latest album "1 0 0 1", the versatile US composer and musician Dustin O'Halloran not only bridges the gap between classical and electronic music, but also between man and machine as well as creativity and artificial intelligence.

040 **Digital Culture: Plurale AI**
For his project "MUTUALISMX", the Mexican artist Hexorcismos invited a group of sound artists and producers to take part in a fascinating project: Using his self-written software SEMILLA.AI, the participants were able to create AI representations and then use them for collaboration. The results are diverse and multifaceted.



Discovered: Julia Holter

While working on her sixth album "Something in the Room She Moves", Julia Holter had to come to terms with death. The production reflects this. It combines live band performances and microscopic studio work, detailed arrangements and improvisation. **Page 36**

Photo: Camille Blake

Top workshops

Free: RetroMod Digital 1
The synth & vaporwave master. **Page 42**

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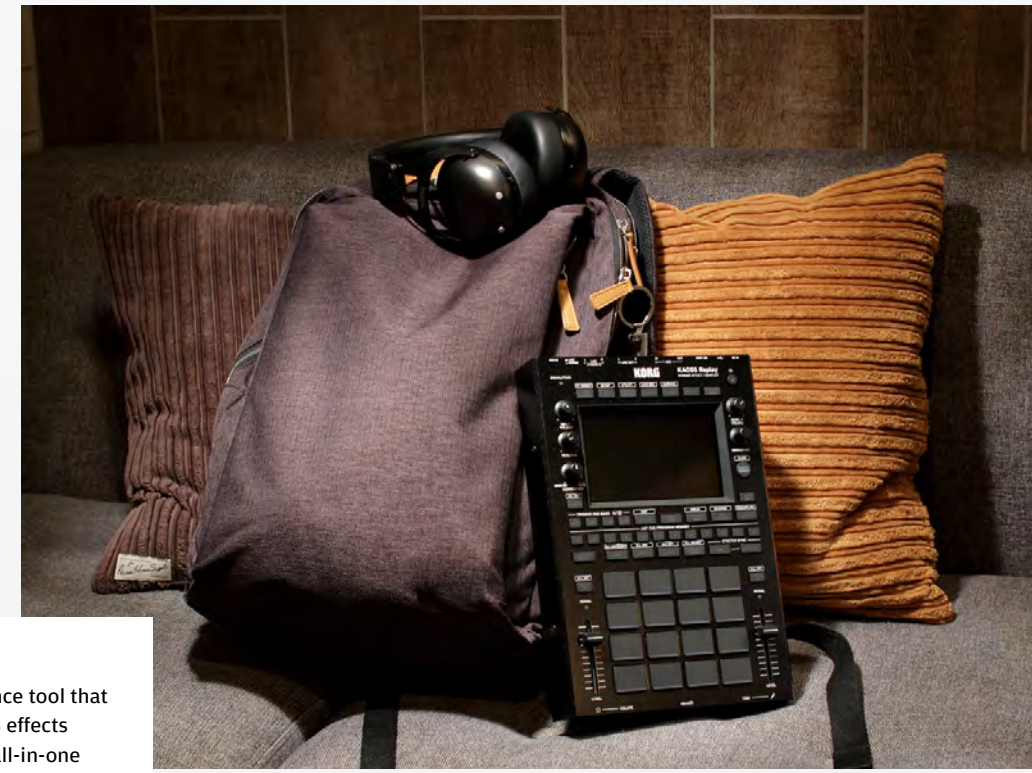

Test: Korg KAOSS Replay

KAOSS Replay is a stand-alone performance tool that revives the concept of the popular KAOSS effects devices. Korg wants to present the ideal all-in-one solution for musicians, live artists and producers. In addition to its unique KAOSS pad with the corresponding effects, Replay also offers sampling and playback as well as various DJ functions. **Page 66**

Cableguys has added the new ReverbShaper module to its ShaperBox host. Thanks to LFO control, the reverb can now help signals to attract more attention in a lively way.

WorkBeat

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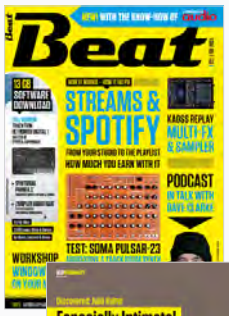
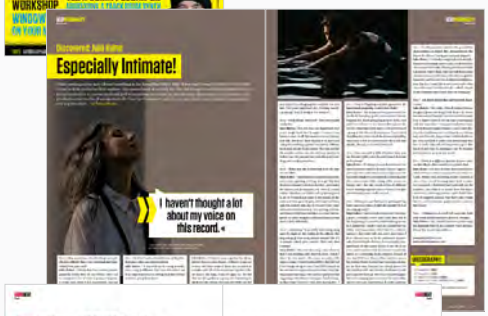


The common thread: Beat issue 06/2024

For many years, Beat has been inspiring its readers not only with practical and musical topics, but above all with the tight integration of editorial content. From the very beginning, Beat has been about creating, about the structured building of ideas and the common thread – in the magazine as well as in the tracks. This navigator shows you the highlights of this issue andallows you to see the big picture.



Discovered: Julia Holter

While working on her sixth album „Something in the Room She Moves“, Julia Holter had to come to terms with death. The record is dedicated to her little nephew, who passed away at an early age. But she also gave birth to her daughter. It was a period marked by a constant push and pull of sensations, a constant up and down, a rollercoaster ride of emotions. The production mirrors this. It amalgamates live band performances and microscopic studio work, detailed arrangements and improvisation. **Page 36**

Test: Korg KAOSS Replay

KAOSS Replay is a stand-alone performance tool that revives the concept of the popular KAOSS effects devices. Korg wants to present the ideal all-in-one solution for musicians, live artists and producers. In addition to its unique KAOSS pad with the corresponding effects, Replay also offers sampling and playback as well as various DJ functions. **Page 66**

Test: SOMA Pulsar-23

Pulsar-23 is an analog drum synthesizer with four tracks for kick, snare, hi-hat/cymbal and bass/percussion. The semi-modular device follows the concept of the organismic synthesizer – this means that all 23 modules including chaos generator, clock and LFO can be interconnected. **Page 64**

Portrait: Dustin O'Halloran

With his latest album “1 0 0 1,” versatile US composer and musician Dustin O'Halloran not only bridges the gap between classical and electronic music but also between human and machine, as well as between creativity and artistic intelligence. In the context of our interview, he not only provided interesting insights into his creative process but also touched upon philosophical thoughts. **Page 38**

Digital culture: AI

For his project MUTUALISMX, Mexican artist Hexorcismos invited a group of sound artists and producers to an intriguing project: Using his self-written software SEMILLA.AI, participants could create AI representations of their artistic persona and then use these to collaborate. The results are diverse and multi-faceted – and they show a path towards a plurality of AI driven by „small“ rather than „big data. **Page 40**

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Facts | Opinions | News | Products

Magazine

by Carl-Philipp Schmeller

2000 presets in the synth flagship Icarus3

With the Icarus3, Tone2 has released the most comprehensive update to date for its flagship synthesizer. Among other things, the approximately 2000 sounds included have been revised and 230 patches are new, giving you even more choice of club-ready sounds. The synthesis functions have been expanded, including new low-pass filters, modulation sources and the transient shaper. The additive synthesis section has been expanded particularly intensively. FM and granular synthesis have also been expanded with additional algorithms. In terms of effects, there is an even greater selection of models for the distortion. The completely redesigned graphical user interface is now scalable in 26 sizes, even up to 8K UHD resolution. The audio engine offers many exciting features such as 62 (!) different synthesis methods, a drum sequencer, a vocoder, 65 (!) filter types, a glitch sequencer, a wavetable editor, an extremely powerful oscillator section and much more. The VST3 and AU versions of the plug-in are now also MPE-capable.

The standalone and plug-in synthesizer Icarus3 is now available for 149 Euros.

More info

tone2.com

149 spatial effects in one pedal from Zoom

Zoom is expanding its MultiStomp series with the third MS-70CDR+ MultiStomp effects pedal. The compact floor pedal includes a total of 149 effects for all guitarists and bassists, ranging from lush chorus to crystal-clear delays and atmospheric reverbs. Create infinite depth and textures. You can use up to six effects simultaneously. Although there are already 80 presets ex works, you can also save your own presets if you wish, either directly on the device or via the Handy Guitar Lab app for iOS. Thanks to the USB-MIDI function, the MS-70CDR+ can also be easily integrated into a studio environment. All parameters for each effect can be set in detail using the four endless controls. The four cross keys are used to switch between effects and patches by tapping them with your foot. A stereo input and output are available. There is also a color-coded LCD backlight. Operation via mains adapter or battery is possible.

The versatile MS-70CDR+ MultiStomp effects unit will be available for purchase in Q2 2024 for 169 Euros.

More info

zoomcorp.com

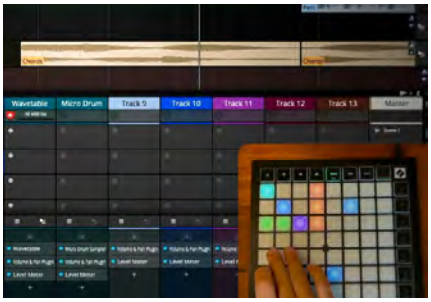
10 sound engines in one stage keyboard from Arturia

With the AstroLab stage keyboard, Arturia has created a combination of software and hardware that should be of particular interest to producers and musicians who demonstrate their skills in live performances. Using advanced Phi/TAE technology, it offers access to over 1000 different sounds. In addition, you have access to over 10,000 sounds through Arturia software. The 61-key keyboard features lightweight keys and 10 different sound engines (Virtual Analog, Samples, Wavetable, FM, Granular, Physical Modeling, Vector Synthesis, Harmonic, Phase Distortion and Vocoder). The display and navigation wheel are helpful for quickly finding and calling up sounds. There are also four macro controls for quick editing. The sounds can then be refined with 17 insert effects, as well as delay and reverb. Further features: Arpeggiator, looper, chord play and scale mode, as well as Bluetooth audio, WiFi, MIDI and audio input and USB interfaces.

Astrolab will be available from retailers from mid-April 2024 for 1599 Euros.

More info

arturia.com



Fire off clips at last with the DAW Waveform Pro 13

The next generation of the DAW Waveform Pro 13 from Tracktion presents itself with a wealth of innovations. These include the Clip Launcher, which can be used to record MIDI, step or audio clips directly and is also compatible with a wide range of Launchpad controllers. There is also a new wavetable synthesizer with two wavetable oscillators and 150 wavetables. Two filters, five effects and a flexible modulation system are integrated into the sound generator. In addition, Waveform Pro 13 allows you to mute track contents during recording, start a recording without activated inputs and Ableton Link support has been improved and new color schemes added. Hundreds of new loops and MIDI files from Mode Audio have been added to the sound library. The DAW also impresses with its user-friendly interface and fast workflow, where creativity is the main focus.

Waveform Pro 13 can be used across platforms for Windows, Mac, Linux and Raspberry Pi. The DAW can be purchased immediately for 199 US Dollars. Waveform Free is also available as a free full version.

tracktion.com

More info

Berlin Dance Music Event 2024 – Win tickets now

The Berlin Dance Music Event (BDME) 2024 is in the starting blocks. For the fifth time, industry insiders, music producers, DJs and passionate ravers will come together to take part in panels, workshops, masterclasses, discussion rounds and, of course, parties. Between May 22 and 26, 2024, Berlin will be transformed into a vibrant meeting place for everyone who is at home in the world of electronic beats. Here, a specialist conference is combined with an exuberant festival experience. Particularly noteworthy are the six top-class master classes for music production by SeeDJ and a production challenge with the online mastering provider Landr, as well as exciting prizes to be won. After dark, 50 events in 20 clubs and 12 bars are set to provide unforgettable nights this year.

Even if the Pro Pass is already sold out, you still have the chance to win a Pro Pass with two tickets. We are giving away a total of two Pro Passes and 6 Conference Passes. Take part in the competition now (see QR code).

berlin-dance-music-event.com

More info

Transparent mixdowns with studio monitors from KRK

Professional mastering and mixing is essential for musicians and producers. This requires studio monitors that reproduce your mixes clearly, powerfully and transparently, and if possible at a reasonable price. The 5th generation of the ROKIT RP5, RP7 and RP8 speaker series from KRK Systems is ideal for these purposes. The near-field monitors consist of a 1-inch tweeter and a 5-inch (RP5), 7-inch (RP7) or 8-inch (RP8) woofer. The smallest model RP5 achieves a maximum sound pressure level of 104 dB SPL, the RP7 reaches 110 dB SPL and the top model 111 dB SPL. The models are powered by a Class D amplifier. Thanks to the integrated DSP chip, the monitors can adapt to the respective acoustic environment. There is a choice of mix, create and focus modes, which can also be switched between using a dedicated app. The DSP chip also offers a choice of 25 EQ combinations to ensure an optimal sound.

The ROKIT RP5 is now available from specialist retailers for 199 Euros, the RP7 is sold for 269 euros and the RP8 costs 329 Euros each.

uaudio.de

More info

Remote music production with Waves Stream

Convenient real-time production with other musicians over the Internet - that's what Waves wants to make possible with the new Stream plug-in. Share your DAW and collaborate remotely with your friends and colleagues. The tool offers collaborative audio editing in high quality. The desired files can be sent without complex configurations. The simplified operation is thanks to the Waves Falcon codec, which ensures lossless audio transfer. The aim is to simplify and speed up the workflow and interaction between musicians and producers. You can conveniently control the mixes in the studio via QR code. In addition to complete sessions, you can also share individual tracks, groups or transients. The manufacturer promises very low latency for this. It is also practical to control the song or track via the integrated microphone function. Each stream is secured with a password-protected connection.

Waves Stream can now be subscribed to for 8.99 US Dollars per month. It supports the formats VST, VST3, AAX and AU.

waves.com

More info

Editorial

BEAT introduces itself

Marco Scherer

Producer, Sound Designer, DJ and Gear Nerd with a big soft spot for samplers. Marco has been making music for as long as he can remember, loves his studio and even runs around outside with microphones and recorders to find and bend the best sounds. Produces Psytrance under Datacult, Techno under the name Villa Violet and creates with his „Drum Depot“ kits for current drum samplers. At BEAT, he is the contact person for (almost) everything and puts his heart and soul into it.

Mario Schumacher

Mario has been on board since the first issue. His musical output is as versatile as his contributions to BEAT: While his Edge Of Dawn explores the field of tension between Synth Pop and Electro, Mario produces Cinematic Electronic Music for Film, TV and Advertising under the name Raging Silence for, among others, Mercedes Benz, Porsche, Audi, Philips and Puma.

Jan Wilking

Synthesizers, samplers and drum machines have defined his life for a good four decades. Inspired by the emerging Synth Pop of the early 80s, particularly the first concerts as a budding teenager like Depeche Mode, Nitzer Ebb and Shock Therapy shaped his further development, which led to the founding of the EBM/Industrial project STERIL in 1990, which was successful mainly in the USA. From the simple cassette recorder, Casio keyboard and mono sampler with mini-memory to the modern DAW with almost unlimited possibilities, Jan has witnessed the development of electronic music production, with his personal conclusion: Less is often more!

Sascha Blach

Passionate music nerd who likes variety as a listener, as well as a singer, musician and producer, because he thinks variety is what makes life interesting - from melancholic Folk to Pop, Electronica and Techno to Indie Rock and Metal, there‘s a lot here. Busy songwriter. Besides his own various projects, he also makes production music. Convinced Apple and Logic user. Loves guitar pedals. Likes to work on a mix for months and still claims to work effectively. Prefers profundity to small talk. That‘s why he‘s also doing extensive interviews at BEAT. In short: Somehow damn versatile, our Sascha!

Maya Consuelo Sternel

Maya Consuelo Sternel, a.k.a. Donna Maya, is a musician, producer and sound artist. She plays Theremin and releases Underground Techno. After earning her Audio Engineer degree, she worked in New York at Unique Recording in Times Square, overseeing productions from Run DMC to Joe Lynn Turner. She is an Ableton Certified Trainer, runs Upstart Electronic Music Education and is co-founder of the Ableton User Group Berlin.

Tobias Fischer

Journalist, author, label owner, listener. Tobias has been writing about music for almost 20 years; 15 of them for BEAT. In doing so, he prefers to go deep below the surface. This is also the case in his „Behind the Beat“ podcast. As long as there is music, Tobias will ask questions - either for new book projects or, in the meanwhile, for the almost 4000 interviews for his project „15 Questions“.

Daniel Bock

New addition to the BEAT team. Actually a guitarist and actually plays Funk, Rock, Alternative & Metal, but secretly always squinted to the synths and Electronic Music. Tells himself that jamming is actually the real music making and producing tracks is not really necessary. Loves gear and creative gear. What would be better for this than a modular system? Consequently, therefore, also responsible for the Eurorack corner of the BEAT.

Carl-Philipp Schmeller

Carl-Philipp has been with Beat since issue 1. His home is Commercial Electronic Music, which he has been passionate about since the 90s and also produces in his own home studio. He also conducts seminars in the field. At Beat, he is responsible for News, Workshops, Reviews and Tests; especially for the last two years now for the English edition and for Beat.de.

Ricarda Becker

Good Fairy, Layout Fairy or simply Graphic Designer... Ricarda has many titles, but only one task: to make the magazine as beautiful as possible. The graphic design is analogous to music: underneath the final result lies a lot of work, sweat and technology that you don‘t even see when you just look at it. We are all the more pleased to have her!

BEHIND THE BEAT

Episode #35 with Dave Clarke

From Red to Techno icon

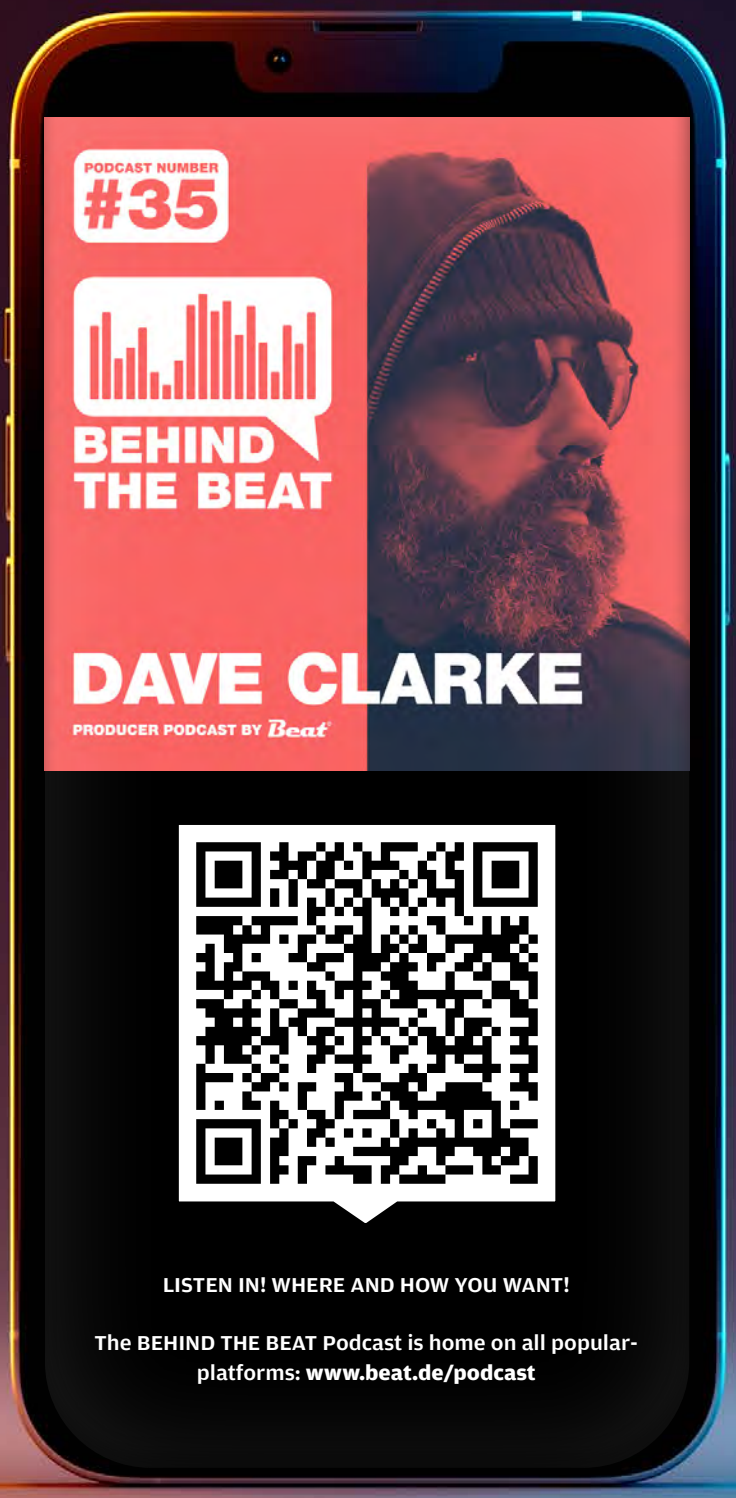
Tobias Fischer is your host for the Behind the Beat Podcast. Each episode features one of the most exciting producers of our time for an in-depth exchange. This episode focuses on techno icon Dave Clarke, whose early Red trilogy is at the core of a lavish new box set.

Between 1989 and 1995, Dave Clarke released 14 EPs under various noms de plume. They paint a picture of an artist in search of new musical shores, of increasingly gripping productions. Above all, however, it was a search for himself.

The Red trilogy marked the end of this phase. On three EPs, Clarke established himself as one of the leading techno producers of his generation. Not one of them obeys the laws of simple categorisation: Red 1 juxtaposes minimalist Detroit sounds with the broken beats and rave basses of the UK scene. Classic „Wisdom to the Wise" indulges in dubby moods with clear parallels to the Basic Channel aesthetic which emerged around the same time. Finally, on Red 3, the bass drum pounds as violently as the hardcore played at a Rotterdam gabba party. Clarke had found his voice - and he proved to be fluent in several languages at the same time.

Together with the 1995 album Archive One, collected remixes from the 90s and a few new ones, the trilogy is now being re-released on vinyl. Dave was happy to take a look back at this seminal era - without ever losing sight of the future.

www.beat.de/podcast



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Interview with Vincent Jenewein
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SOOPER TALK: VINCENT JENEWEIN

IN TOUCH WITH THE CREATORS

Beat / Hi Vincent, great that you're back again – SUPERBOOTH is going into round six! For someone who hasn't been attending the last five times, can you tell in a nutshell what the event is all about?

Vincent / Superbooth is the world's biggest trade fair and festival for electronic musical instruments happening in Berlin, Germany. Once a year, people from all over the world get together to celebrate electronic music making with over 250 exhibitors from all over the world and a comprehensive program of musical performances and workshops. For us, it's not just about showing the latest gear, but also about bringing people together over their shared passion of making electronic music!

Beat / What's the hottest news and changes for 2024?

Vincent / We have two new areas this year, the Strandbar and a new rooftop area. The Strandbar is a new floor that will present various DJ sets and a place to get drinks with a relaxed atmosphere. The rooftop area will be open only to our exhibitors to conduct various business deals etc. during the day. But it will be open to everyone in the evening, so they can end the day with drinks and a great view!

Beat / The modular sector is growing and growing and growing ... Do you see a current hype? What about polyphonic synths – is the hype as big as it seems?

Vincent / I don't really see any hype. I think the market is at a point where all sorts of different products are equally offered at the same time. If you want modular, there's modular. If you want poly synths, there's poly synths! It's a great time to b e making music, gear wise.

Beat / Your opinion: Is the omnipresent AI also influencing the synth and modular scene?

Vincent / Not yet, as far as I can see. There are some specialized tools for things like removing vocals from stems already, but I don't think there's a ChatGPT or Midjourney for music yet. But who knows what the future will bring!

Beat / Why should people also visit SUPERBOOTH, even if they're not into modular synths?

Vincent / While modular is a big part of Superbooth, our exhibitors go far beyond the modular scene. At Superbooth you can find not just modular, but analog synths, digital synths, acoustic instruments, software, guitar pedals, pro audio gear and more!

Beat / What are your personal highlights for this edition, what are you looking for the most?

Vincent / The great Superbooth atmosphere, mostly – just walking around and seeing happy smiling people everywhere!

Beat / How will YOU enjoy SUPERBOOTH 2024?

Vincent / With great food, great gear, great music, and great people!

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HOW IT WORKS - WHAT IT DOES

STREAM$ & SPOTIFY

FROM THE STUDIO TO THE PLAYLIST HOW MUCH YOU EARN WITH IT

Streaming services have long since revolutionized the way we consume music - and they don't stay out of the headlines. But which platforms are the most important for music creators and podcasters? How do you place your tracks successfully, how do you increase your popularity and why does your sound have to be featured in Spotify and Apple playlists? Look forward to our big special, in which we provide all the answers about streaming and also show you how and where you can ultimately make sales with streams.

by Laura Emiliano, Tobias Fischer, Marco Scherer

It is remarkable how music consumption behavior has changed in the last two decades: from the free offering of music via net labels and self-distribution to legal downloads and crowdfunding to streaming. As a survey by the Bitkom industry association has shown, every second internet user now uses streaming platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music or Deezer. Of these, one in three has a paid subscription. Since 2013, the number of users of streaming services has more than quintupled and the trend is rising. And the number of users is still growing rapidly worldwide: according to MIDiA Research, in 2024 revenue from streaming services will exceed the total revenue from the music recording market in 2018.

Brave new streaming world

From a user perspective, the advantages of platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon Music are obvious: streaming services allow constant access to gigantic music libraries - regardless of whether you are at home or on the go. The only technical requirement is an appropriate device with Internet access such as a smartphone, tablet, PC or TV. For high-quality music enjoyment, technologies such as Spotify Connect, Alexa Cast or Apple's AirPlay allow streams to be transmitted to compatible speakers.

With the free version of Spotify and Deezer you can access over 50 million songs as well as podcasts and audio books. However, there are commercial breaks, the audio quality is reduced and listening to music is not possible without an internet connection. A monthly subscription, which usually ranges between 10 and 15 euros depending on the provider, offers ad-free music enjoyment in higher audio quality. For the price of 10 to 12 CDs per year, you have access to a seemingly endless and constantly growing catalog of titles at any time. The musical spectrum ranges from current hit albums to classics from music history. Many providers also offer discounts for students and families. On the following pages you will find a comprehensive overview of the individual features, strengths and weaknesses of the most important streaming platforms.

What are the benefits of streaming for musicians?

It's sobering when you hear how little money musicians receive per stream. With Tidal you get 1 euro for 89 streams, while with Spotify you need 277 streams for this amount. On YouTube / Google Music, a whopping 1612 streams are required to earn 1 euro. Nevertheless, there are many reasons for musicians to use streaming services: They allow you to reach a huge audience and dramatically expand your fan base. The greater your popularity on streaming platforms, the greater the number of potential buyers of digital downloads, recordings, merchandising or concert tickets. With Spotify you can even advertise live gigs directly on your artist page. And even if you receive relatively little money from streaming providers, the exploitation time for releases is significantly longer than for sound carriers. By the way, streams also affect chart positions: 1,500 song streams count as much as 10 song downloads and one album sale. To be evaluated, at least 30 seconds of a title must be played.

Hardly any income, but no losses on sales either

by Beat author Marco Scherer

Streaming is not only the future, it has already become omnipresent. And the technology is great because most new music is now easily found on the Internet. With its radio-like principle, streaming makes it much easier for the audience to find new music than, for example, online stores. Although the concepts will probably have to be revised again if a provider like Spotify is allegedly still making big losses.

What is comforting, however, is the fact that, according to a study, we artists and producers earn almost nothing from streaming, but we also do not have to accept any losses in music sales. So should streaming be seen as free advertising that can reach the largest audience? We'll see. In any case, I'm excited to see what happens in 2024.

Podcasts for musicians

Podcasts are also a great way to keep your fans entertained and increase awareness. How about, for example, a podcast in which you talk about your new song or album production, inspirations or your adventures on tour? There are now entire documentary series by well-known artists such as the alternative band The Pixies as well as the punk legend Henry Rollins and his assistant Heidi May. No less popular is the podcast "Broken Record", in which, among other things, Cult music producer Rick Rubin (Adele, Eminem, Lady Gaga, Linkin Park and many more) has his say.

Spotify for Artists

Is your music available on Spotify through collaboration with an online distributor or label? In this case, you should definitely verify your artist account [1] so that you can manage your artist profile yourself. This means you can not only design your Spotify page yourself, e.g. with your own images, a biography and links to your social media pages. You can also promote music and concerts on your profile. Or how about creating your own playlists with your songs and the music of similar artists? A big plus are the extensive statistics, which provide information about, among other things, which of your songs are the most successful, where fans come from and how old they are, etc. This means you can respond more specifically to your listeners in future releases. For example, if your most successful tracks are very danceable, you could take this into account in future productions. For example, if a majority of your listeners come from Mexico, you could also release a track with Spanish vocal samples.

Plan your releases

If you want to release a new song or album, careful planning is very important. Some music distributors allow you to define the release date on common streaming platforms. Once you know when your label or music distributor will release your new work, you can start promoting it on your social media pages. A video can also help to draw attention to the release. If you work with a label, they will definitely promote your new work. But it doesn't hurt to have a direct line to the fans. Some music distributors also offer streaming promotion and playlist pitching for new releases.

Playlist marketing

How do I get on playlists, which ones do I have to be on and what do I get out of it?

If you want to „be there“ on platforms like Spotify or Apple Music and reach a large audience, there‘s no getting around playlists. There are two types here: curated, put together by people on the one hand. And generated individually for each listener by the algorithm. How do you land on one and the other? Which ones are most important for your own genre? And what, other than streaming millions, does that bring?

What‘s the point of ending up on a playlist?

Let‘s start with the most important question: what‘s the point of landing on Spotify on Modus Mio, New Music Friday or Electronic Rising? Reach, revenue and even more reach. This can be summed up very briefly. Because large playlists have millions of listeners who would otherwise never hear your song. And as soon as the clicks go up, you as a band become more “interesting” for the algorithm. So two things happen with this.

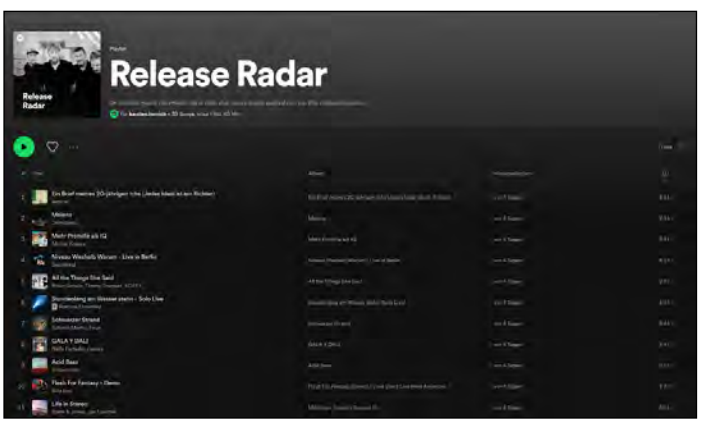
On the one hand, the song slips into the automatic recommendations. If you scroll to the bottom of a band profile on Spotify, you‘ve probably seen similar artists and bands. These are not there because one person listened to all the music and placed it there. An algorithm decided that. Spotify (and the other platforms like Apple Music or Amazon Music) scans your songs and rates them according to a series of unfortunately rather obscure criteria such as “mood” or “danceability”. Based on these values, your song will then be suggested to even more listeners. But only when it has a certain range.

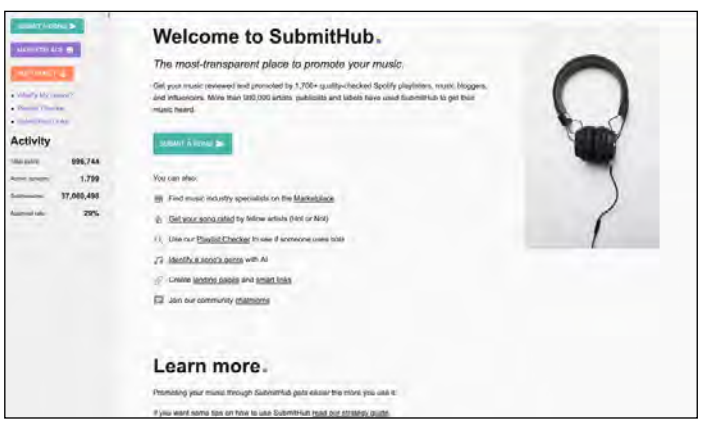
On the other hand, in addition to the playlists created by humans, there are also a large number of automatically generated ones. The Release Radar, for example, which introduces you to new, freshly released songs every week, is created individually for each listener. But playlists for going for a run or for different moods are also filled by the algorithm. And here too, the algorithm is more likely to respond to your songs if they are already on major playlists.

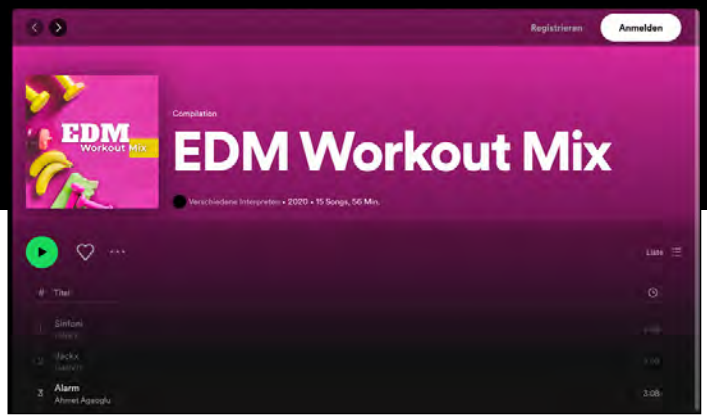
How do I get on the big playlists?

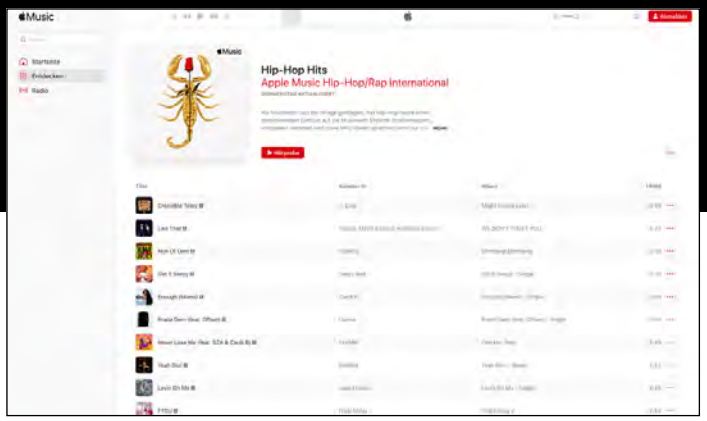
Anyone who is just starting out, just releasing their first songs through a digital distributor like Tunecore or Distrokid, has to take a different path than established artists. For example, there is Submithub. This is a platform where international playlist curators and music bloggers can register. Submithub lists these playlisters by genre and sends them your songs to choose from via the platform. The whole thing runs via a paid credits system. Depending on the playlister, you use 1-5 credits, but this only guarantees that he will listen to your song at all. There is no guarantee that you will end up on playlists.

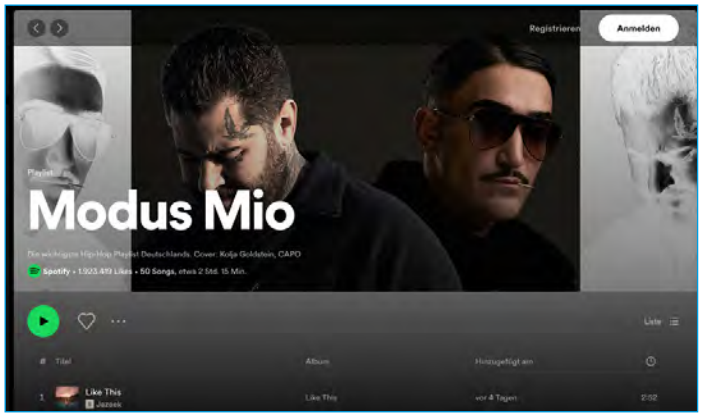
This means that, especially when you are at the very beginning, you have to work very much according to the scattering principle. Contact as many playlists as possible that fit your own genre via Submithub, also distribute clips and entire songs on social media and post them frequently. Depending on your ambition and budget, you

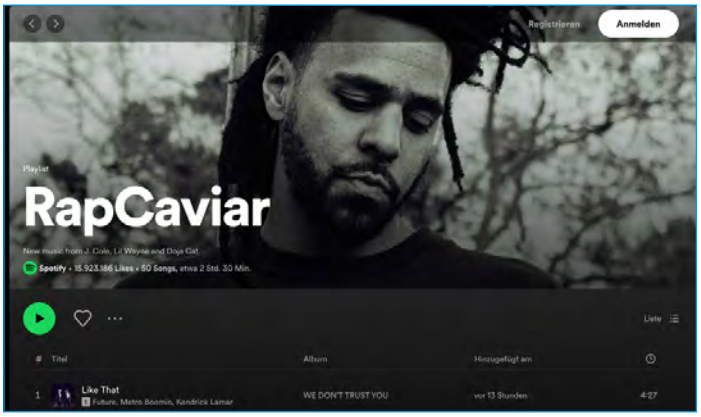












shouldn't be afraid to advertise on Instagram, YouTube, etc., also with short clips, in order to increase your reach.

When it comes to playlisting, people often talk about "feeding" the algorithm, especially in relation to Spotify. For a long time, the most important rule here was to maintain a very strict release rhythm of new singles every six weeks for several years. If you've done this for a while and used „Spotify for Artists" for every release to apply for playlists on Spotify itself, and contacted small playlisters via a service like Submithub, sooner or later you'll end up on playlists.

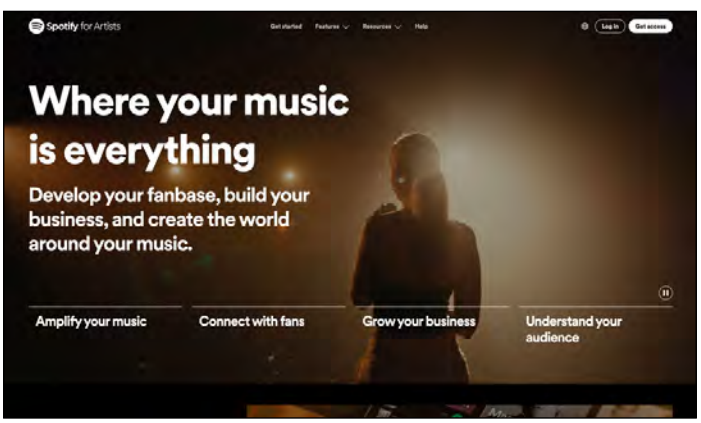
There is also the "PreSave" game, especially for the Release Radar. You've probably seen bands or artists you follow on social media ask their followers to „presave" a song. If you do this, the song will automatically end up on your release radar as soon as it is published. But if a lot of followers do this, the song not only ends up on their release radars, but also on many others.

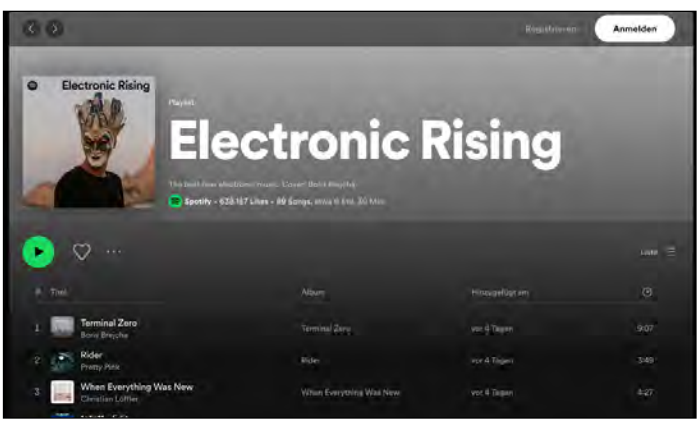
What big playlists are there from your own genre?

Since we all produce in too many different genres, it would be beyond the scope to list the biggest playlists for all genres here. But how do you tell if it's a human-curated or "algorithmic" playlist? If a playlist (e.g. Release Radar, Discover Weekly or Happy Hits) has your own username under the title, it is an individualized one created by the algorithm just for you. If it says "Spotify" or an editor's name, it's a curated list.

With almost two million followers (comparable to its US counterpart Rap Caviar), German Hip Hop is one of the largest playlists ever in German-speaking countries. "New Music Friday," which primarily features Pop music, is also curated and has over four million followers. When it comes to electronic music, there is "Dance Brandneu" in Germany with around 300,000 followers and the international "Main Stage" with a good two million followers.

Trying to land on sports or mood-related playlists can also be very worthwhile. Landing on a big workout list or a spring fever list can actually do more in the long run because these playlists are replaced less often. Research who creates such lists and whether there is a way to contact the person or company directly.


Spotify for Artists
Where your music is everything
Develop your fanbase, build your business, and create the world around your music.
Amplify your music
Connect with fans
Grow your business
Understand your audience



What difference does the playlist make?

Out of balance

With a few exceptions, no hit is conceivable without being placed on an important playlist. The largest of them, "Today's Top Hits," has 34 million followers, potentially reaching as many listeners as Olivia Rodrigo and Lana del Rey. For most musicians, playlist placements are the only way to achieve significant streams. So how do you get into the playlists that can make a difference?

When it comes to playlists, many people first think of the lists that are put together by the respective platforms themselves. In fact, these so-called "editorial playlists" enjoy a clear priority over the "user-generated" ones. Nevertheless, it is precisely the breadth of the streaming ecosystem that makes the concept so effective. From style-oriented playlists to functional ones (dinner music, sounds for sports and fitness) and compilations aimed at specific moods (melancholy, celebration), there is always the right mix for everyone and every occasion.

Although well-known names and major labels undoubtedly find it much easier to get into the hot playlists, it is by no means the case that this opportunity is completely closed to independent projects. Just like all other systems, it is the little surprises and outliers from the monotony that keep a streaming offer interesting and fresh in the long term. For this reason, Spotify allows us to pitch a track with an accompanying press release with „for Artists" to the editors of the playlists (or the apps they work with), for example.

The real winner in recent years has been algorithmic playlists.

These are compilations that are created completely without human involvement and are usually calculated taking the users' listening habits into account. That means: Even if these lists always have the same name, everyone hears something different in their respective profiles. The best-known playlist of this genre is "Discover Weekly", which makes music suggestions just in time for Monday and has such a high hit rate that for some people it alone is the reason for paying the monthly subscription fee. Algorithmic playlists can be influenced with the new "Discovery Mode" tool. Discovery Mode can be explained as a kind of pact: Spotify undertakes to give its listeners preferential access to the tracks posted via Discovery Mode and, in return, the producers waive 30% of their streaming royalties. If the campaign is successful and the streaming numbers increase, the chance of a promising placement in playlists also increases - and the matter gains momentum of its own.

The situation is different with user-generated playlists.

Some of these playlists are simply made by fans for fans, focus on very specific topics and have barely more than a few hundred followers. Others are essentially static and are not updated regularly or at all. But there are also large playlists that are run by companies, labels or influencers and have a professional character. Being included in these can certainly have a positive effect on your own income, even if only a few of them come close to the following of the Spotify editorials: For example, if you are looking for music for jogging, you can use Nike's "Run Club", a playlist with 150,000 listeners . But even the sporting goods giant pales in comparison to Spotify's own „Run Wild" with its almost 2.5 million followers - so you shouldn't expect too much from it.

How do I get into user-generated playlists?

Even if a little research is required, many playlist operators can be contacted directly. This also makes it possible to send them your own music and suggest it for use on the playlists. The playlist "House Music 2024 (Top 100)," for example, is run by the party organization team Uncommon, which has an Instagram account and can be reached via email. Even bigger are some of the playlists from Soave Records or Future House, whose impact in genres like techno is not much inferior to that of Spotify Editorials. [1] On this website you can upload demos using simple drag and drop to get feedback - it couldn't be more convenient. Directories of all user playlists with direct contact options are available, for example via the Playlist Supply service. However, the experiences are obviously not always equally positive. [2]

If this research seems too time-consuming or uncertain, you can submit your own music to the curators using services such as Submithub or Playlist Push. It works like this: For a monthly fee, the interface allows participating playlist owners to play and offer one or more tracks. In return, they give feedback and decide either for or against the song. The idea is based on the inherently positive idea that the compilers of playlists also benefit from being provided with exciting new music without having to fight their way through the impenetrable forest of new music. The high costs associated with Playlist Push - starting price: $285 for 48 playlist pitches up to $5,000 for just over 800 pitches - are intended to serve as a kind of filter. [3]

Of course, this concept also often fails due to the fundamental imbalance in the power relationship between playlist curators and musicians as well as between the Spotify community and Spotify itself. Experience reports seem to show that many curators who are actually paid by the site to listen to track suggestions – provide useless and/or standard feedback or automatically reject any

[1] https://www.soaverecords.com/ and https://futurehousecloud.com/ [2] https://www.rightchordmusic.co.uk/playlistsupply-part-of-the-problem/
[3] https://playlistpush.com/ [4] https://www.reddit.com/r/WeAreTheMusicMakers/comments/cp8z82/i_submitted_my_song_to_62_submithub_playlists_and/

suggestions. [4] The dimensions of most playlists also make the undertaking seem rather ridiculous: Anyone who pays 250 euros and receives 100 plays in a completely insignificant list is unlikely to see this experiment as a success. It seems better to create your own playlists, keep them continually and carefully updated and promote them with Facebook ads or advertising from other channels. In general, it is clear that, similar to telephone sales, a "cold start" is almost never particularly promising. Spotify Discovery Mode is only available to artists with at least 25,000 listeners per month. For once, this is not harassment, but is simply based on the experience that anything that falls below this value will only interest very few people anyway.

The problem, however, is that such attempts with promotional tools can backfire.

Discovery mode, playlist push or integration into bot playlists on the gray market may lead to more plays in the short term. However, the algorithm can become unbalanced. Suppose you produce synth-pop and, thanks to Discovery Mode, it ends up in the playlists of listeners who listen to genres like Indie Rock or Electronic Jazz. Then your own music will no longer be listed in the correct categories at the end of the campaign. Even the very important overview of "related artists" can change. Some report that Discovery Mode ultimately had negative effects. [5]

Playlist marketing can't be completely nonsensical simply because it is actively used by all major labels. What is crucial for its usefulness is that it is part of a broader strategy - which ensures that with so many activities running in parallel, the common thread is never lost.

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcfnKb9emSM

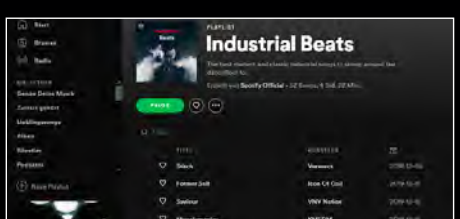
The 10 top streaming services

PROVIDER	Tidal	Amazon Music	Spotify
Type of service	Streaming	Streaming & Download	Streaming
Free trial peroid	30 days	90 days	90 days
Prices for monthly subscriptions	10,99 Euro (HiFI) 19,99 Euro (HiFi Plus)	10,99 Euro 9,99 Euro as Prime member	10,99 Euro, 5,99 Euro student 14,99 Euro Duo, 17,99 Euro family
Number of titles offered	More than 100 Mio	More than 100 Mio	More than 100 Mio
Available platforms	WatchOS	WatchOS	WatchOS
Listener share in the streaming market [1]	Under 2 %	11 %	32 %
Earnings for artists per stream	0.012 Euro	0,006 Euro	0,003 Euro
How many streams are needed for 1 Euro [2]	77 Streams	167 Streams	334 Streams
Upload aggregators	Distrokid, TuneCore, LANDR, Amuse and many more	Distrokid, TuneCore, LANDR, Amuse and many more	Distrokid, TuneCore, LANDR, Amuse and many more
Streaming quality	320 kpbs on the go 16-bit, 44.1 kHz for HiFi 24 Bit, 192 kHz for HiFi Plus	HD: 16-bit, 44.1 kHz Ultra HD: 24-bit, up to 192 kHz	Webplayer: AAC with 128kbit with free, 256kbit with Premium App: AAC up to 160kbit with Free, OGG up to 320 kbit with Premium
Immersive formats	Dolby Atmos and Sony 360 Reality Audio.	3D-Audio	none
Streaming formats	-	unknown	MP3, M4P, MP4
Mastering LUFS level	-14 LUFS	-14 LUFS	-14 LUFS
Advantages and disadvantages	▲ Big audience ▲ Worthwhile earnings ▲ 250,000 videos on offer ▲ Behind the Scenes Videos ▲ Concert livestreams ▲ Discounts for students and family members ▲ Playlist import from other platforms ▲ High streaming quality ▼ Artist Pages only possible via a service	▲ Popularity of the service ▲ Directly connected to Alexa ▲ 2 million free songs for Amazon Prime customers ▲ Discounts for families and students	▲ Create and share your own playlists ▲ Editable artist pages ▲ Monthly reports on number of listeners ▲ Support for artists ▲ Spotify for Artists App ▲ Easy to integrate into websites and social media ▲ Top selection of music ▲ Very good recommendations ▲ Great performance ▼ Low income
Suitable for podcasts?	√	X	√
Verdict	Innovative service that relies on audio and video, especially behind the scenes	The giant with the largest audience for streams and download sales	Mandatory platform with the most design options for musicians

Why are Spotify playlists so important?

What are playlists?

The most important tool for increasing the popularity of your music on Spotify is playlists. 70% of



playlists such as your "Mix of the Week" or "Release Radar" are automatically compiled based on your listening behavior. Countless musical styles and moods are covered. The song suggestions on an algorithmic basis surprisingly match your own taste surprisingly well. The remaining 30% of all playlists are curated, i.e. created by Spotify users.

How do you suggest your own songs for Spotify playlists?

Before releasing a song (e.g. through an online distributor), you can suggest it for consideration in a playlist via the Spotify for Artists page. Make sure to fill out the relevant form in as much detail as possible. The Spotify team will review the song and hopefully place it on editorial playlists such as Release Radar.

Curated playlists

Unfortunately, Spotify does not offer a way to contact playlist curators directly. It's no wonder that many artists use services to place their music in

[1] Source: Statista; [2] Source: Digitalmusicnews.com; [3] Exchange rate: 1 Euro = 1,112 US-Dollar

Napster / Rhapsody	Apple Music	YouTube Music
Streaming	Streaming & Download	Streaming & Download
30 days	30 days	30 days
10,99 Euro 14,99 Euro family	10,99 Euro 5,99 Euro student 16,99 Euro family	10,99 Euro 5,49 Euro student 16,99 Euro family
More than 110 Mio	More than 100 Mio	More than 100 Mio
WatchOS	WatchOS	WatchOS
unknown	13 %	9 %
0.018 Euro	0,01 Euro	0,006 Euro
56 Streams	100 Streams	167 Streams
Distrokid, TuneCore, LANDR, Amuse and many more	Distrokid, TuneCore, LANDR, Amuse and many more	Distrokid, TuneCore, LANDR, Amuse and many more
AAC – up to 320 kBit/s	AAC Lossless: 16 Bit at 44,1 kHz, 24 Bit at 48 kHz Hi-Resolution Lossless: 24 Bit at 192 kHz	Free: 128 kbps AAC Premium: 256kbps AAC
Dolby Atmos for some titles	3D Audio	–
–	AAC	AAC
unknown	-16 LUFS	-14 LUFS
▲ Create and share your own playlists ▲ Worthwhile earnings ▲ O2 users receive a 20% discount ▲ Track what music friends are listening to ▲ Videos on offer ▼ No family discounts	▲ In-depth analysis of listeners ▲ Popularity of the service ▲ iTunes archive ▲ Own live radio station ▲ Videos on affer ▲ Apple Classical app for separate listening and sorting of classical music ▼ Reliant on AirPlay	▲ Direct upload of music without distribution partners ▲ Support as Live chat ▲ Radio stations tailored to interests ▲ High streaming quality ▼ Recommendations not always reliable
X	√	X
The most profitable provider for musicians, but with almost no market share	Like Amazon, a giant when it comes to streams and download sales	Hardly any earnings, but the most uncomplicated provider with the greatest freedom

high-traffic playlists. These tools cost money, but the investment can be worth it. The best-known services include Playlistpush, Indiemono, Pitch Playlist and SubmitHub. If you don't want to invest money, you can try finding curators on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

If you choose this route, it's a good idea to follow playlists that appeal to you. Maintain contact with the relevant curators and then suggest a song that would fit into their playlist. Maybe musician friends also have their own Spotify playlists so you can support each other? By the way, there are also groups on Facebook for promoting music such as "Spotify Trades and Playlists" or "Spotify Promotion".

Modern mixtapes

It's also worth putting some work into creating your own playlists. Choose a style or mood that suits you and add music from artists that inspire you and from friendly bands and projects. Also sprinkle in a few selected songs of your own. A good start is 20 to 60 titles per list. The more clearly defined the musical theme, the better. A playlist called "Dark Minimal Techno" is certainly easier to find than one called "Techno". Promote your playlists on your social media pages and let other artists know that you've included their songs. With a bit of luck, they will also make your fans aware of it, increasing the chance that you will reach new listeners with your music. You can also inform music enthusiasts about your playlist in the Spotify Community.

PROVIDER	SoundCloud Go	Qobuz	Deezer
Kind of service	Streaming	Streaming	Streaming
Free trial period	30 days	30 days	60 days
Prices for monthly subscriptions	9,99 Euro	14,99 Euro Studio Solo 19,99 Euro Sublime Solo	11,99 Euro 12,99 Euro Duo 19,99 Euro Family
Number of titles offered	More than 135 Mio	More than 100 Mio	More than 120 Mio
Available Plattforms	Browser, iOS, Android, Sonos	WatchOS	WatchOS
Listener share in the streaming- market [1]	unknown	Under 1%	2 %
Earnings for artists per stream	unknown	0,04 Euro	0,006 Euro
How many streams are needed for 1 Euro [2]	unknown	25 Streams	167 Streams
Upload aggregators	Soundcloud	Distrokid, TuneCore, LANDR, Amuse and many more	Distrokid, TuneCore, LANDR, Amuse and many more
Streaming quality	AAC – up to 320 kBit/s	FLAC 24-Bit, up to 192 kHz with Studio FLAC 24-Bit, up to 192 kHz with Sublime	Mp3 up to 320 kbit/s FLAC up to 1411 kbit/s
Immersive formata	–	THX Spatial Audio	–
Streaming Formats	–	MP3, FLAC	MP3, FLAC
Mastering LUFS level	unknown	unknown	-15 LUFS
Advantages and disadvantages	▲ Direct contact with listeners ▲ Create and share playlists ▲ Upload music yourself ▲ Music can be shared ▲ Easy to integrate into websites and social media ▲ Direct upload of music without distribution partners ▲ Statistics ▲ Musik videos ▼ Very little licensed music	▲ Playlist import from other platforms ▲ Digital booklets for albums ▲ High streaming quality ▲ Album reviews and artist biographies ▼ Still unknown platform	▲ Direct upload of music without distribution partners ▲ Support as live chat ▲ Radio stations tailored to interests ▲ Recommendations not always reliable ▲ High streaming quality ▲ Artist Centric Model can lead to fairer distribution of streams ▼ Recommendations not always reliable
Suitable for podcasts?	√	√	√
Verdict	Established audience, great opportunities for newcomers and direct upload. A must!	The underdog on the way up. Not yet supported by all aggregators	The No. 1 Spotify competitor and specialist for podcasts

Essential tools for mastering for streaming services

Nugen Audio MasterCheck

Mastering for iTunes, Spotify or YouTube & Co. is an art in itself. After all, every platform has its own music format, and different bit rates are often used. To make matters worse, loudness matching algorithms are often used. All of these processes can have a significant impact on your mixes, whether in the form of distortion or making a loud, punchy mix suddenly sound flat and quiet. MasterCheck makes mastering for streaming services easier. On the one hand, the tool allows you to listen to your mix in the desired target format and bit rate. By measuring the RMS level, dynamic range and true peak level of sources, it also helps to comply with common loudness standards.

www.nugenaudio.com | 199 US-Dollar

Mastering The Mix Expose

Anyone who masters music is confronted with a variety of target formats and playback systems. While a song sounds good on CD, for example, problems such as digital clipping can occur when played back via iTunes or Spotify. The standalone program Expose helps detect such problems. You can load up to 17 songs that you want to check and compare with reference values, e.g. for mastering for Spotify or Apple Music. The software analyzes the loudness, peak level, stereo field and dynamic range of the audio files. Problematic areas are highlighted in red in the audio file. Expose impresses as a practical and inexpensive tool for the final quality control of songs. Ultimately, identified problems can be specifically eliminated in the DAW.

www.masteringthemix.com | 35 Euro

ADPTR Metric AB

The Metric AB plug-in also specializes in comparing mixes with reference songs. It is simply placed on the master bus after any insert effects. You can then load up to 16 reference tracks in common audio formats using drag & drop. You can now switch between the loaded audio files and your own mix, with the volume being adjusted automatically. Presets allow volume and dynamics to be compared with reference presets such as Spotify, YouTube, iTunes and various EBU and broadcast standards. Thanks to the filter function, you can also hear a specific frequency range in isolation. Metric AB scores points as a precise and easy-to-use tool that effectively supports mastering for streaming platforms.

www.plugin-alliance.com | 199 US-Dollar

[1] Source: Statista; [2] Source: Digitalmusicnews.com; [3] Conversion rate: 1 Euro = 1,112 US-Dollar

Amanda Palmer's 2011 album „Theater Is Evil" is proof of how successful clever crowd funding campaigns can be. Almost 1.2 million US dollars were invested by over 24,000 supporters.

Think out of the box

Alternatives to streaming plattforms

Streaming services undoubtedly offer a lot of benefits for artists, such as the ability to make their music available to a global audience. On the other hand, Spotify, Apple Music & Co. contribute significantly to the devaluation of music. For many users of streaming services, purchasing music simply no longer has any incentive. Labels and artists only receive a fraction of a cent per stream. This makes income from music sales, merchandising and live performances all the more important.

The best of both worlds

The publication of a physical sound recording is now countered by a variety of digital distribution channels, which – coupled with the Internet as an effective distribution channel – promise a worldwide audience and a much more direct approach to target groups. With streaming services, download portals and efficient mail orders, there is now a wide selection of providers that cover all conceivable quality levels with MP3s, vinyl, CDs and data in studio master quality. Countless product gradations are possible, from streams to luxurious fan packages with posters and T-shirts. If you want to be successful with your own music today, you should ideally rely on a combination of the best providers.

Make money with music

You have the best chance of making money with your own music when you combine multiple sources of income. Streaming and social networks ensure the desired reach, while other products, services and live performances generate the largest share of income. For bands or DJs, for example, it has proven useful to sell CDs and merchandising products such as T-shirts at gigs. But of course you can offer these products for sale online alongside your digital releases. On sites like Bandcamp and ReverbNation you can sell your music on your own and earn a significantly higher percentage than with standard online shops. Many producers also earn money as remixers or DJs. As a talented songwriter, studio musician, producer or remixer, you can offer your talent and know-how to other artists on a fee basis or for a share of the income.

Exclusive products

Although CD sales have declined enormously in the last two decades due to download and streaming platforms, they still exist: the collectors of physical recordings. As intensive buyers, they account for almost half of sales of sound carriers. Even though the way music is listened to has changed dramatically in recent years, the CD is far from obsolete: Compared to streaming, it not only offers better sound because it is not lossy. It also gives die-hard recording junkies a physical product they can listen to over and over again. So it's no wonder that independent labels in particular rely on exclusive products for passionate music fans, such as elegant special editions, vinyl releases or unusual packaging ideas. This is how a simple sound carrier becomes an art object that cannot be copied. Even the MCs long thought dead have been making a comeback in recent years. The charm of the non-digital and the certain exclusivity of the cassette format are particularly appreciated in smaller scenes such as the industrial, noise or punk scene. A hand-recorded audio cassette with an attractively designed cover can be a great collector's item - and therefore a good addition to CD & Co.

Bands like Nine Inch Nails are known for their exclusive collector's items such as the 4-LP set of the soundtrack to the Netflix film „Bird Box", which contains extended compositions and exclusive material.

Crowdfunding

Do you already have a solid fan base that is eagerly waiting for a new album? For established artists and bands, crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter are an interesting alternative to labels to finance their music productions. The most popular addresses are Indiegogo, Patreon, Kickstarter and the German platform Startnext. Amanda Palmer, Marillion, Einstürzende Neubauten and The Libertines have already financed their publications extremely successfully using crowdfunding. The clever idea behind these reward-based projects is that fans can choose between different rewards, such as the resulting album as a download or recorded media, special editions with merchandise or personal remixes, guest vocal contributions or living room concerts. It is important that there is a suitable reward for every budget. Would you like to crowdfund your next album? Be inspired by successful projects such as the current campaign by the electro-pop project Assemblage 23 [1]. Through crowdfunding, music projects and bands without a label can also afford to produce a small vinyl edition or other exclusive recording variants.

Merchandising

In addition to T-shirts, baseball caps, hoodies and other printed textiles, buttons, stickers, posters and cups are popular merchandise items. Sales are common at band concerts or DJ gigs, but you can also sell your merchandising products to fans via sites like Spreadshirt. Your own online shop can be set up quickly. You can then design items such as T-shirts, baseball caps or mugs, including text and band logo or other images. The prices can be freely determined. Your fans can then order the products directly from the provider. Tip: Promote your merchandising items on your social media pages so that your fans can order the items directly. Products are only printed once they have been ordered.

[1] www.indiegogo.com/projects/support-the-new-assemblage-23-album

Six microphones for podcaster and streamers

Elgato Wave:1

Recordings are possible at sample rates of 48 kHz at 24 bit. The frequency response is 70 Hz to 20 kHz and the polar pattern is cardioid. The Clipguard function deserves special mention. If the input level is too high, the signal is redirected to a second signal path with a lower volume. All audio sources on the computer can be managed using mixing software.

Web: ..... www.elgato.com
Distribution: Elgato
Price: ..... 139 Euro

Røde NT-USB

The Røde NT-USB condenser microphone has a stereo headphone jack and a mix control for latency-free monitoring. A table tripod is included. Most users should be satisfied with a frequency range of 20 Hz to 20 kHz. Recordings are possible at 48 kHz with 16 bit. The sound transducer is suitable for recording instruments, podcasting and streaming applications.

Web: ..... www.rode.com
Distribution: Hyperactive
Price: ..... 189 Euro

Apogee Mic Plus

The Apogee Mic Plus is a USB condenser microphone that enables recording at up to 24 bit at 96 kHz. The directional characteristic is cardioid and this transducer also has a headphone output with blend function built in. The Apogee Mic Plus also impresses with an excellent preamplifier from the manufacturer and is also interesting for studio applications for this reason.

Web: ..... www.apogeedigital.com
Distribution: Sound Service
Price: ..... 215 Euro

Sennheiser MK4 Digital

To achieve the best possible sound, an Apogee preamplifier was integrated. The frequency response covers everything from 20 Hz to 20 kHz. Recordings are possible at up to 96 kHz at 24 bit. A headphone jack and preamplifier are not included. The manufacturer probably assumed that monitoring would be solved separately. In terms of sound, the microphone is completely convincing.

Web: ..... www.sennheiser.com
Distribution: Sennheiser
Price: ..... 388 Euro

Sontronics Podcast Pro

The Sontronics Podcast Pro is the only microphone in our overview that does not have a USB connection. But this is anything but a negative point, as the microphone was developed specifically for podcasters. A supercardioid pattern was chosen as the directional characteristic and the frequency response ranges from 50 Hz – 15 kHz. An integrated pop filter and mounting bracket as well as an excellent price make this microphone interesting for beginners and professional users.

Web: ..... www.sontronics.com
Distribution: Audiowerk
Price: ..... 112 Euro

beyerdynamic Fox USB

With a sampling rate of 96 kHz at 24 bit, professional recordings can be created with the beyerdynamic Fox USB. The capsule of the large diaphragm condenser microphone has a cardioid polar pattern. By the way, the microphone can be easily muted using the mute button. This is particularly interesting for streaming applications. This means that each user can decide for themselves which things are shared with the public.

Web: ..... www.beyerdynamic.de
Distribution: Self-distribution
Price: ..... 146 Euro

Six ideal headphones for live streams

ESI Extra 10

The ESI Extra 10 are dynamic, studio-quality, circumaural monitoring headphones. The transmission range is 15Hz to 29 kHz. 50 mm neodymium drivers were used. What should be highlighted are the high level of comfort, a balanced sound and the good price-performance ratio. Users with a low budget are particularly satisfied here.

Web: ..... www.esi-audio.de
Distribution: Hyperactive
Price: ..... 57 Euro

beyerdynamic DT 979 PV

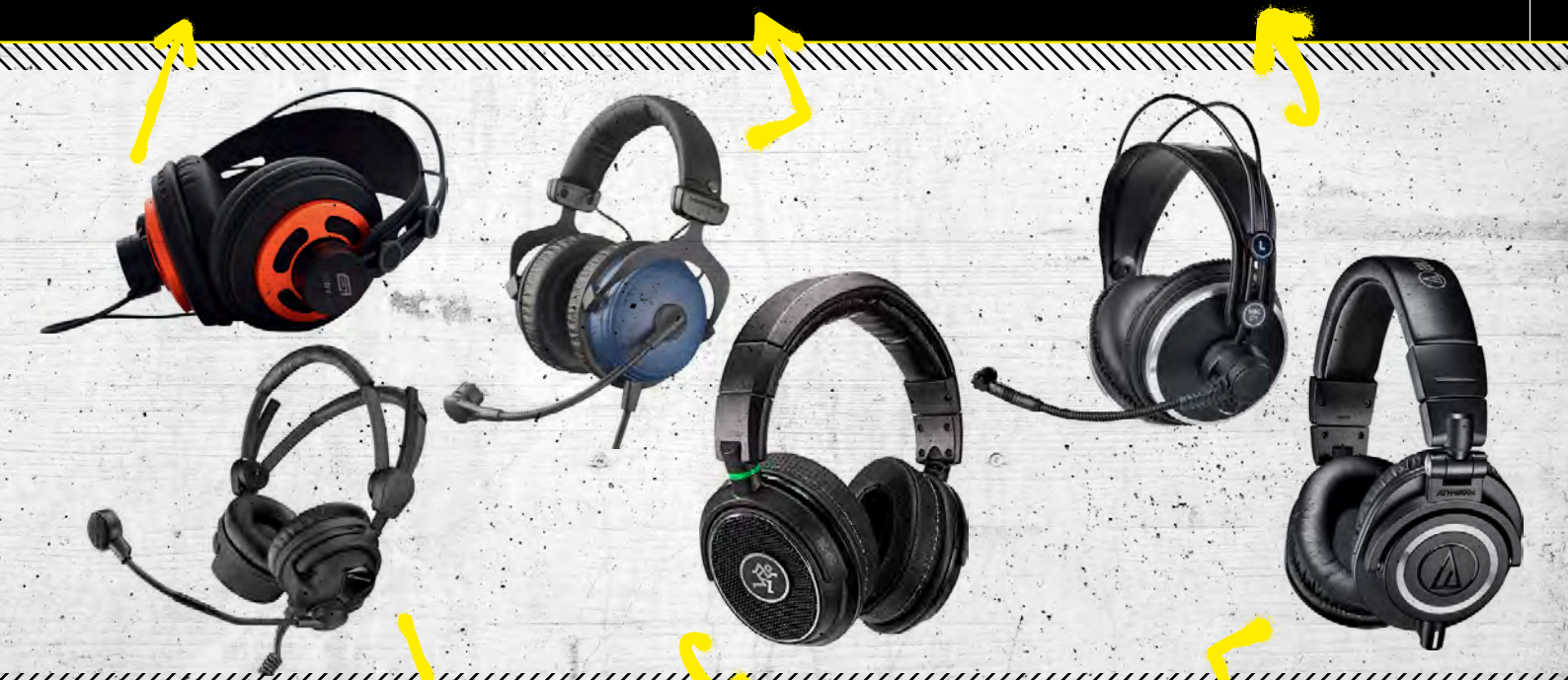
The beyerdynamic DT 979 PV impresses with its closed design and an integrated condenser microphone. The rotating gooseneck microphone arm can be adjusted to almost any position. The transmission range is 5-30,000 Hz and the noise-insulating housing, in combination with the circumaural ear pads, ensures excellent isolation from external noise.

Web: ..... www.beyerdynamic.de
Distribution: Self-distribution
Price: ..... 290 Euro

AKG HSC271

The AKG HSC271 is a closed, circumaural headphone with a transmission range of 16-28,000 Hz. The built-in condenser microphone has a cardioid characteristic and an impressive transmission range of 20-20,000 Hz. When the microphone boom arm is folded upwards, the microphone switches off automatically. If users take off the headphones, they also switch to mute.

Web: ..... www.akg.com
Distribution: Self-distribution
Price: ..... 262 Euro



Sennheiser HMD26-II-600

The dynamic, closed, supra-aural headphones have a transmission range of 20-18,000 Hz and are equipped with a dynamic microphone with a hypercardioid characteristic. The headphones are designed for particularly high sound pressure levels, while at the same time providing good, passive external noise attenuation. The swiveling microphone can be worn on the right or left side.

Web: ..... www.sennheiser.com
Distribution: Self-distribution
Price: ..... 429 Euro

Mackie MC-450

The Mackie MC-450 features a high-quality, adjustable leather headband and memory foam ear cushions. The great wearing comfort makes the headphones also interesting for longer sessions. Interchangeable cables with a lockable bayonet plug, a 42 mm driver and a frequency response of 20-20,000 Hz make the headphones a perfect companion for podcasting and streaming.

Web: ..... www.mackie.com
Distribution: Self-distribution
Price: ..... 291 Euro

Audio-Technica ATH-M50 X

The Audio-Technica ATH-M50 X was equipped with a 45 mm driver with a neodymium magnet system. The dynamic, closed and circumaural headphones have a transmission range of 15-28,000 Hz. The ear cups, which can be swiveled by 90 degrees, ensure a small pack size and make the headphones also interesting for mobile applications. These headphones impress with their excellent price-performance ratio.

Web: ..... www.audio-technica.com
Distribution: Audio-Technica
Price: ..... 125 Euro

Streaming explained transparently

The fight for survival

There will probably be no way around streaming in 2024. That‘s certainly not good news. But maybe it‘s not bad news either. There won‘t be much money flowing in any time soon. But there are always opportunities. And: nothing is as volatile as the status quo - the next revolution could be just around the corner.

Should I really do it or should I just leave it alone? This is a question not only for fans of German Hip-Hop, but also for everyone who wants listeners for their music and appropriate remuneration. Royalties have always been low. But there were certainly reasons to remain optimistic: as the number of paying subscribers increases, it should become increasingly easier for streaming platforms to pay out appropriate compensation. And with the entry of providers like Tidal and Qobuz, whose business models were based on higher audio quality and more artist-friendly royalties, a change seemed to be on the horizon. Almost a decade after the beginning of the streaming age, there is little sign of this.

One could even say that the pent-up anger has now built up into a wave. Hardly a day goes by without a call to mobilize against low payouts and to support artists by purchasing physical recordings. Such campaigns may be successful in the short term, but are no more a model for the future than Patreon accounts, which now mostly seem to be languishing. Since bandcamp lost its independence and creative innocence and is now apparently being kicked like a football from one IT giant to the next, smaller artists in particular have been worried about the complete collapse of their download statistics and physical recording revenue.

One could beat around the bush, but why? Streaming revenue is pitifully low.

This may not be particularly professional terminology, but it is true. Worse than this wretchedness is that...

> One could beat around the bush, but why? Streaming revue is pitifully low. «

- ...the payouts are clearly not increasing, but are decreasing and Tidal - the industry leader and alleged champion of artists‘ interests - is also orienting itself downwards,
- ... the pro-stream royalties have long since leveled off at a very low level and there are therefore hardly any real alternatives to the market leaders,
- ...a redistribution takes place in favor of the majors, with those who already earn more being given further preference,
- ... and that those who already earn next to nothing will be penalized by the introduction of a payout hurdle of 1,000 streams.

However, it must also be noted that the current plight is at least to a large extent home-made. During the long transition phase from CD to downloads to streams, spurred on by the promises of the IT giants and media shortcuts, it looked as if anyone could make it as an artist. Now many are hit all the harder by the realization that this idea was naïve from the start: too many are fighting for the favor of listeners whose financial options are severely limited by inflation, falling real wages and the parallel rise in the cost of films, news magazines, video games and other services. The scope to spend a significant portion of one‘s income on music will decrease rather than increase.

The desire to get away from this game and from the streaming industry is understandable. But does it make sense?

For such a strategy to bear fruit, it must be built on a foundation of very loyal fans. And it is precisely this foundation that is proving to be rather fragile. On the other hand, a single successful streaming track can generate more income than years of trying to sell a handful of CDs to women or men. I run a small label with my brother and we resisted putting the music we release on Spotify for a long time. When we finally gave in to the spirit of the times, one of our current pieces on Apple Music was, completely unexpectedly, streamed a million and a half times. The income from this is more than we earned in 10 years of label work.

So maybe there really is no way around it at the moment. But there was also a time when no one seriously believed that vinyl would ever make a comeback. Several scenarios are conceivable in which companies like Spotify could disappear from the scene. As soon as several big names like Taylor Swift pull their music from the platforms or only license it temporarily, the decline can begin. Netflix or Prime have managed to educate customers to be content with an extremely limited selection of films and series. It seems unlikely that the music industry will be able to do the same.

Is there life outside of streaming? The next few years will show. For some, rebelling against this becomes a fight for survival. For now, it‘s simply a reality for musicians that has to be faced. And as the following pages will show, it is a reality that is far more nuanced and complex than is commonly portrayed. Stream, yes or no? The answer is of course: „Yes and no at the same time!“

Streams are the new currency

Like teeth brushing

Streams are the new currency in the digital music age. This means: the more streams, the higher your income - regardless of whether even a single listener knows who the music actually comes from. This incentive system is going wild. Some of them are promising. Others threaten the future of streaming.

The fact that you can make easy money with bot farms and the use of AI on Spotify is one of those urban legends that endure for a long time. There are certainly more lucrative business areas than streaming music. Plus, you still lose more than you put in. Spotify is ideal for money laundering, which is why it is extremely popular with criminals. [1] Creative companies that focus on productivity and fill their coffers through sheer mass are doing better.

One album a day, 15 billion streams

Since the beginning of the year, Michiru Aoyama has been releasing a complete album every day, each of which consists of exactly eight tracks with a playing time of 2:33. That makes a total of almost 1000 tracks. By the end of 2024, this figure could have risen to almost 3,000 - „it's like brushing my teeth," says Aoyama. The Japanese producer has reportedly managed to earn enough to quit his job in the IT industry. [2] The Swede Johan Röhr is even busier. According to a recent report, Röhr has launched almost 650 projects over the years. By integrating his music into the right playlists, he has achieved 15 billion streams and his company a turnover of over 6 million euros. [3]

It is hardly a coincidence that both artists compose ambient music in the broadest sense - music that can be produced very quickly and at a high sound level if required and is usually only consumed playing in the background. Especially when it comes to mood sounds and playlists for concentrated work or relaxation, many listeners are not interested in the people behind the pseudonyms anyway, the only thing that counts is a continuous, uninterrupted, soothing soundtrack. This allows the aforementioned musicians to release one track after the other like an assembly line and drive up their numbers - Röhr has already overtaken Michael Jackson and Mariah Carey with the total volume of his streams on Spotify and, according to industry experts, is well on the way to achieving Beatles status.

Röhr's fake profiles are often presented as a problem. But playing with identities, especially in electronic music, has been part of the culture since time immemorial and the production quality of his pieces is undoubtedly impressive. What's more serious is that labels like Firefly Entertainment, also from Sweden and associated with Röhr through various publications, take on these commissioned works in large batches and thus take up more and more free playlist space. There are many more potential Röhrs out there - perhaps soon also in the pop sector.

AI to power!

If music production can be standardized in this way, then nothing stands in the way of AI gradually taking over these functions. Particularly in the ambient and downbeat areas, quite audible results can be achieved with apps or at least with the intensive use of automated processes. Spotify undoubtedly has an interest in preventing exactly this, because flooding the system with generative material always carries the risk of financial collapse. Even if third-party providers are publicly put in their place, it cannot be ruled out that the platforms themselves will take over AI leadership. If this succeeds without alienating the main shareholders and customers, the coup would be perfect: music that only generates income but costs practically nothing more.

At least outwardly, efforts are still being made to curb Ki-generated pieces and non-musical content such as white and brown noise, ocean waves and birdsong. But this is rarely effective. Musician and activist Benn Jordan has demonstrated in various YouTube videos how digital distributors on behalf of Spotify regularly falsely accuse the acts they represent of fraud. He himself was completely banned by his distributor Tunecore, with serious financial consequences. [4] The fines that have to be paid - apparently without the possibility of appealing - perversely generate an attractive additional income. This is how Spotify kills two birds with one stone: putting a stop to the use of AI software and squeezing even more money out of already exploited musicians.

In the long term, however, none of the streaming providers has an interest in allowing this situation to continue. One solution could be to completely outsource soundscapes and non-music to a secondary service - Relaxify?. But as soon as AI is also used in classic songwriting, techno and house or sophisticated productions, the questions will come back. And it will take better answers - and perhaps a new currency - to answer them satisfactorily.

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/sep/05/swedish-criminal-gangs-using-fake-spotify-streams-to-launder-money
[2] https://musictech.com/news/music/michiru-aoyama-one-album-a-day-spotify/ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVY7-Ti77UQ
[3] https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/this-secret-composer-is-behind-650-fake-artists-on-spotify-his-music-has-been-streamed-15bn-times-on-the-platform-report/?fbclid=IwAR2hBv418zpgHwnKru15QVoGmaxXAy_bDOUvlsNoEs4evHHV9aXxODUk3Kg [4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVY7-Ti77UQ

How does the business actually work?

The show must go on

Spotify is often referred to as a "black box". That means: Nobody knows exactly what's going on inside and how decisions are made. Because there is more to be gained from secrets and opacity than from transparency, Daniel Ek has never publicly contradicted this idea. In reality, you don't need to study cryptology to understand what a promising streaming strategy should look like. Here we reveal the secret.

Like every other platform, Spotify attaches great importance to retaining users for as long as possible, converting casual listeners into paying customers and increasing advertising revenue through increasing user numbers. Everything you do as a creative to help achieve these goals will be rewarded. Anything that goes against this or simply does not promote it will be punished. As an outsider, it may sometimes seem quite arbitrary why some tracks end up on major playlists and are streamed millions of times, while almost identical material remain unnoticed. However, there is a very simple system behind it.

High quality, time and time again

In two enlightening YouTube videos, producer L.Dre explained exactly how he managed to turn his passion for music into a career using lofi hip-hop instrumentals. [1]

His strategy for success on Spotify or any comparable app consists of a multi-phase plan:

Use streaming figures and playlist rankings to find out exactly what music is currently popular and working.

- Compose tracks that follow these trends. This is not a guide to copying, but you don't have to reinvent the wheel every time.
- Produce as much music as you can and develop a release routine.
- Be active on social media. The music has to spread virally there, otherwise it won't be successful. This means: either you make cool videos yourself that go viral. Or, even better, as many users as possible use the music in their clips.
- Reply to the comments and, if necessary, implement ideas from your fans when producing new pieces. This is how you build a very close community.
- Lead your fans from social media via links directly to the streaming pages. The more people you bring to Spotify, the more valuable you become from the algorithm's point of view.
- Write good press releases in which you make it clear which playlists you fit into and which hits by well-known musicians your tracks are similar to.
- Follow this routine until your music ends up in playlists. Placements in the right playlists lead to a rapid increase in streams - but as soon as you are taken out again, the values drop just as dramatically.

Of course, luck is still part of it. But that has never been any different in the history of the music industry. There are also more than enough examples of careers that, just like L.Dre's, have developed without the influence of the majors or expensive PR agencies. French-Canadian Marc Rebillet has spent years posting his performances in simple bars and restaurants online and filming himself performing in his bedroom at home. His clip „Your New Morning Alarm", which was less than a minute long, reached almost 40 million streams on YouTube. Shortly afterwards, the eccentric soul diva Erykah Badu came out as a fan and improvised with Rebillet on camera in completely crazy sessions.

But L-Dre's success also shows what success really means.

Because as the musician openly admits, even several million streams have not brought him any wealth, but "only" a terraced house with a small garden and a video game console. He is by no means financially secure. In a brutal self-deprecation, L.Dre admitted to letting things slide after achieving his goals. The "laziness" had consequences: his profile on Spotify quickly lost 31 million streams a year.

There is no time for a break, the show must go on. To a certain extent, this also applies to employees in an insurance company or tax advisors. However, in the less schematic creative field, external pressure can quickly lead to blockages. While L.Dre has now vowed to work harder than ever before, Marc Rebillet's strategy looks completely different: nothing new from him has appeared on YouTube or Spotify for months. Instead, he only posts occasionally on Facebook and Instagram and prefers to tour the world - including Germany.

Will he regret it once the concert series ends and his former followers are no longer interested in his online content? Perhaps. At least he will have had a lot of fun doing it - and won't have to publicly chastise himself afterwards.

Photo: L Dre

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZ17btmzNK8 and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlkRLKeFv8o

Spotify alternatives

Holistic listening

Qobuz is one of the smallest streaming services on the market. But it is a leader when it comes to quality and respect for art.

There are many alternatives to the major streaming platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon - but only a few of them really stand out. Qobuz is one of them. Founded in 2007, the service offered the first true high-definition streaming experience and supports artists through an integrated digital download store. Qobuz values human playlist curation and in-depth editorial content. We spoke to the Qobuz team about the motivations and lessons learned from their nearly two-decade pursuit of excellence in a sea of mediocrity. Qobuz is one of the smallest streaming services on the market. But it is a leader when it comes to quality and respect for the arts.

Beat / Qobuz is approaching its 20th birthday. What have been the cornerstones of the journey so far?

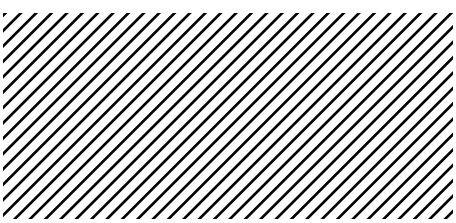
Qobuz Team / We have always believed that free streaming undermines the value of music and artists, that sound quality is essential to preserving that value, and that human recommendations are central to music discovery. For 15 years, we have remained true to this vision despite the further development of our offering. In recent years we have focused on growth. Today we are present in 26 countries in Europe, North and South America, Oceania and Asia.

Beat / Your approach seems to place more emphasis on direct artist relationships.

Qobuz Team / In fact, we have and are in the process of developing numerous collaborations with artists and labels such as ECM, Blue Note, Zappa Records, Westbound Records, Secretly Group, International Anthem, Mercury KX and Deutsche Grammophon. Wayne Coyne, frontman of American rock music icons The Flaming Lips, and Christian McBride, eight-time GRAMMY award winner in Jazz, have both teamed up with Qobuz to create playlists and publish video interviews and other exclusive content.

Beat / Are you seeing a growing interest among mainstream listeners in better audio quality and better journalistic content?

Qobuz Team / It is clear that with technological advances - be it through 5G or the quality and accessibility of devices - user demands are increasing.



> **» Free streaming undermines the value of music and artists. To maintain this value, sound quality is essential. «**

For example, in a recent study we conducted, 66% of young adults ages 18 to 34 clearly recognized the connection between sound quality and hearing health. There is also a resurgence of interest and a certain nostalgia for old-school personalized music experiences, as evidenced by the comeback of vinyl. With digital booklets, human curation and extensive editorial contributions in Qobuz magazine, we are able to offer a deeper, more holistic digital listening experience reminiscent of a visit to a traditional record store.

Beat / Other providers have followed your example in terms of audio quality.

Qobuz Team / Yes, we have noticed a shift towards platforms that offer a higher quality music experience. This trend confirms the relevance of the long-standing Qobuz model, which prioritizes the best sound quality to respect the work and the artist. Since 2020, for example, we have been offering all our subscriptions in Hi-Res and lossless quality. However, Atmos support would be a huge expense for Qobuz with no clear ROI. Therefore, it is not at the top of our priority list.

Beat / Qobuz differs from other streaming platforms in that it also offers downloads. What significance do downloads still have?

Qobuz Team / Downloads remain relevant for a number of reasons. Some are very attached to their music collections, be it to rediscover old favorites, digitize existing albums or to gain access to high-resolution tracks that are not available on mainstream platforms. These people come to us and spend a lot of money to build up their collections. This is especially true for DJs who can't compromise on the quality of the tracks they play. In addition, conscious consumers are opting for downloads to directly support artists and the industry. Buying music still means better payment for the creators compared to streaming.

Beat / How do you see the future of physical formats?

Qobuz Team / We believe that vinyl records will continue to be valued as collector's items in the future. Vinyl has become an iconic object that symbolizes our deep relationship with music. We do not see Vinyl and Qobuz as competition to our streaming service. They complement each other.

Beat / Is owning suitable high-end streaming hardware a requirement to enjoy Qobuz?

Qobuz Team / Enjoying lossless music is actually very easy. Most people probably already have everything they need to get started right away. In the car you only need a wired connection; a USB cable from a corresponding main device is usually sufficient. For a home system, you can get up to 24/96 with your smartphone and an AudioQuest Dragonfly for about 100 US-Dollar. This device is wired into the home system and sounds very good. Better DACs and streamers improve sound, and there are hundreds of devices on the market that cost anywhere from 150 to over 150.000 US-Dollar depending on the system.

qobuz.com

Time for new ideas?

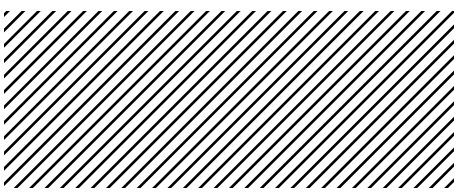
Give us back control!

For almost ten years, the technologies that enable streaming and make it useful have been constantly improving. But very little has fundamentally changed about the experience. In direct comparison with record stores, clubs and radio, today‘s streaming services still seem like search engines - cold, unemotional and without the actually important view of the bigger picture. Some rethinkers believe that the time has come for new ideas.

One of the ideas to make streaming more exciting is super fans. That makes sense, because even in the music industry‘s boom years, there were always a few people who were responsible for the majority of sales. This target group is already being addressed with VIP tickets, different colored vinyl LPs of the same album or deluxe editions. Services like Vault and Bandcamp Exclusives go further. These subscription services specifically make archive recordings and otherwise unreleased bonus material available for download - music that, for various reasons, never made it onto the usual channels. The design of this concept is left flexibly to the respective artists and ranges from quick downloading of the material to long-term artist-listener relationships. [1]

The sonu.stream platform takes this idea a little further. Artists can post, stream and sell exclusive material here using blockchain technology. The highlight: There can only be one current owner. After the sale, the artist and owner share the streaming income on the platform - so super fans become patrons and entrepreneurs at the same time and share the success with their favorite producers. The concept is so elegant and obviously attractive that it lends itself to being copied from one of the major platforms. [2]

Marine Snow, on the other hand, is aimed less at super fans than at those who enjoy discovery. The platform deals with two problems of the Spotify age: (firstly) there is simply too much music and yet (secondly) everyone only seems to want to listen to the same thing. In Marine Snow, however, the exclusive tracks only remain playable for 90 days, after which they are no longer available. This creates a constant rotation that gives you a feeling of forward movement and change. The unconventional user interface draws on the aesthetics and logic of video game concepts - you don‘t have to like it, but at least you have to admire the creativity behind it. [3]



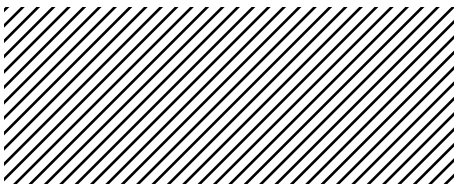
> No amount of creative approach will seriously eliminate streamers‘ poor payment practices.

Question finances

Marine Snow works with an unusual approach to artist compensation: those selected for the app receive an amount of 1,500 euros, which is roughly equivalent to 500,000 Spotify streams in the US. This is unlikely to catch on in the mainstream. But as an impetus to question the finances of streaming, it is one of the most interesting ideas proposed in recent years.

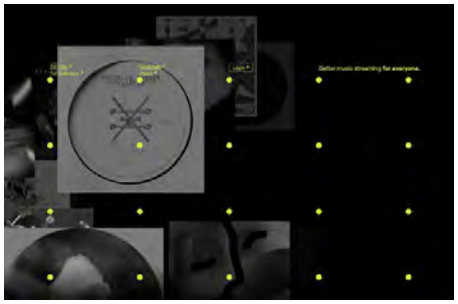
It is still not common knowledge that musicians only get paid their share of the total streaming volume. For example, if you reach 500,000 streams for a song, Spotify calculates the ratio of this value to the total number of streams on the platform - this then forms the basis for the payouts. The easiest approach to change would certainly be to move to a model where artists are paid per stream. Then you would actually receive what you are entitled to.

Alternatively, payment could be made per listening time, which could change the rampant tendency towards ever shorter songs and perhaps even herald a return to longer formats. It is also interesting to consider the idea of giving higher ratings to those streams that are not streamed via playlists, but rather arise from direct visits to the artist profiles - here too, a focus on fans and “active” listeners instead of passive background entertainment. The suggestion that the basic monthly amount should only cover a certain number of streams is more radical - if you want to listen to more, you should buy additional minutes from the mobile phone provider, as if your data volume has been exceeded. [4]



None of the approaches mentioned will seriously eliminate the poor payment behavior of streamers. That‘s why it‘s surprising that more labels don‘t follow Catalytic Sound Stream‘s example. Some labels and artists from the experimental jazz sector have come together and programmed an app that allows you to access the shared catalog. From a monthly amount of 5 euros you can become part of a collective and directly support the participating acts. More expensive fan packages offer video options and physical products. [5]

If applied on a broad basis, this approach would of course lead to market fragmentation. But at least control has returned to where it belongs: in the hands of those who create the product, music, on which this industry was built in the first place.



[1] https://vault.fm/ [2] https://sonu.stream/ [3] https://ra.co/news/77429
[4] https://www.igroovemusic.com/blog/how-could-a-new-streaming-model-look-like.html [5] https://www.catalyticsound.com/

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Discovered: Julia Holter

Especially Intimate!

While working on her sixth album „Something in the Room She Moves", Julia Holter had to come to terms with death. The record is dedicated to her little nephew, who passed away at an early age. But she also gave birth to her daughter. It was a period marked by a constant push and pull of sensations, a constant up and down, a rollercoaster ride of emotions. The production mirrors this. It amalgamates live band performances and microscopic studio work, detailed arrangements and improvisation. by Tobias Fischer

» I haven't thought a lot about my voice on this record. «

Julia Holter's new album feeds from a deep electronic production and spontaeneous jam sessions alike.

*Beat / **How would you describe the process for the new album? Was it very planned and controlled from your end?***
Julia Holter / I think that the creative process generally works best for me when I don't try to anticipate a lot of what is going to happen. It works best when I just experiment and see where things lead.

*Beat / **So there's not a visualisation of the finished piece when you start working.***
Julia Holter / It depends on the song actually, every song is different. But a lot of it comes out of an improvisation first, seeing what that reveals and then going from there.

*Beat / **Tell me a bit about the the way the album came together.***
Julia Holter / I think it came together like all my albums have to some degree. Different songs are written and then some of them are recorded in a studio with all of the musicians together. Like on aviary, the song „Turn the light on," we did that one all together as a group. For Something in the Room She Moves, because of COVID, we did not have a lot of people in the studio at the same time. But we did have the core rhythm section

and myself recording together and that was very fun. The same happened for „Evening mood", „Spinning", and „Talking to the whisper".

*Beat / **What about "Sun Girl?" That one sounds really free.***
Julia Holter / For that one, we improvised over a very rough chart hat I brought - I mean, it was barely a chart at all! The session was very jammy and silly. But then I basically tore it all apart and collaged something together completely different from what we did in the studio. The idea was for the samples to have sort of a rhythmic quality. So in that case, the process was more like post recording, post studio production.

*Beat / **What was the interaction with the musicians like?***
Julia Holter / I wanted to have a specific mood for each track, capturing a feeling. So to get that kind of colour required a lot of production - processing the drums a lot, for example. For "Meyou", I made a demo. But then, we didn't end up listening to it at all. So everyone just came to the studio, my friends and these great singers. And I just had them sing this melody with me. So it's just a very basic oral and verbal instruction - you just sing with me. And then we drift apart and then we come back together. So, every song has a different focus and was made a little differently.

*Beat / **„Spinning" is a really interesting song and it's right at the centre of the album. The beginning of that song almost sounds like it's a sample which gets looped. How was that created?***
Julia Holter / The way that song came about is that I was working with MIDI to write, which I don't do that much. But more recently, with some scoring, I started using MIDI a little bit and I had things set up so that I had MIDI sound on drums and on organ at the same time. I was hitting drums and organ because my keyboard was triggering both drums and organ. Really funny, so that's how I wrote it: I was just playing this - I guess it's like a fast quarter note - over and over. And it sounded really cool.

*Beat / **The drums throughout the album sound great, do they have any real depth?***
Julia Holter / The drums are very processed, basically by bringing up the resonance in certain frequencies. These grm plugins were really cool and I used those on the drums throughout the record. I think that really gave it a lot of the sound - giving it this this psych resonance. You're kind of pulling the noise out of the drums and adding more tone and it becomes almost like a bell. Just slightly, though, and a little distorted.

*Beat / **Can you talk a little bit about how you see the role of the voice in your music? It seems to be pivotal.***
Julia Holter / It's funny you say that because I'm more and more tired of my voice. I mean, I appreciate my voice, and I don't want it to go away. But one of the things I'm interested in is working with other voices more. I like change, I like to try new things. And I like the sound of lots of different voices working together and so I haven't thought a lot about my voice on this record.

*Beat / **When you say that you're getting fed up with your own voice, is that the sound? Or is it the singing itself?***
Julia Holter / I'm not really fed up with my voice, I guess I shouldn't have said it like that. But at the beginning, I actually started writing music as a composer, I didn't start as a performer initially. And sometimes I feel like it's a little limiting to just work with one one's own voice. I don't always want to be the performer exclusively. I love all kinds of voices. I was recently commissioned by the Opera North in the UK to do a live performance with the chorus to perform music to a screening of the Passion of Joan of Arc, the 1920 Carl Dreyer film. And that was a big project which involved me writing for chorus for the first time. Besides that choral piece, I've also worked with two friends, Katherine Lamb and Laura Steenberge. We're not trained singers. But we're singing pieces we write for each other. And it's very raw, and very fun. It really made me want to continue working with other voices singing together.

*Beat / **So did you ever consider the possibility of recording an album like „Something in the Room She Moves" using just external singers?***
Julia Holter / I actually thought about it initially. Especially for background vocals, I'm kind of like: why not just work with other singers? But a lot of it is practical. Like I often come up with these parts too last minute. And by then, I already brought the singers in, and we can't do another recording session. But yes, I would like to work more with other voices for sure. I would even do a whole record of just someone else's voice that I'm writing for.

*Beat / **Are there voices that particularly inspire you?***
Julia Holter / Not really. I like all kinds of voices. (laughs) I guess one thing I did think a lot about was intonation. I wanted my voice to slide around a lot, I wanted there to be this fluid counterpoint with the bass lines. I was particularly listening a lot to [Lebanese singer] Fairouz. I don't think there's a direct influence on my album in an obvious way, but I love the frequencies and the timbre of her voice and how it works with instruments and how it works with call and response singers. The mood of her voice is amazing to me. It's breathy and yet she can go quite low as well.

*Beat / **There is a different quality in your voice on this album. How would you explain that.***
Julia Holter / My voice in some ways seemed very subdued to me, at least compared to my other records. When I was recording vocals, I started to notice that a lot of the songs have kind of quieter vocal parts. I think that had to do with my life situation. Our child is in school now but didn't used to be, and so my partner and I didn't have a lot of complete privacy. And that's why I think there's a sort of intimate quality to the vocals on this record.

*Beat / **Intimacy is a word I'd associate with your vocal performances in general, though.***
Julia Holter / Yes, I would say most of my songs are generally kind of in a quieter voice anyway. But on this record especially so.

www.juliaholter.com
www.dominomusic.com

DISCOGRAPHY:

// Tragedy / 2011
// Tragedy / 2012
// Loud City Song / 2013
// Have You in My Wilderness / 2015
// Aviary / 2018
// Something in the Room She Moves / 2024

Portrait: Dustin O'Halloran

Human and machine

With his latest album "1 0 0 1," versatile US composer and musician Dustin O'Halloran not only bridges the gap between classical and electronic music but also between human and machine, as well as between creativity and artistic intelligence. In the context of our interview, he not only provided interesting insights into his creative process, which also involved working with orchestra and choir but also touched upon philosophical thoughts that concern nothing less than the future of humanity.

Interview: Sascha Blach, Photos: Anna Maggy Grimsdottir

***Beat /** Congratulations. "1 0 0 1" is a very exciting project. The album info states that nature, consciousness, technology and the revolutionary consequences of artificial intelligence inspired you to create this music. What does that mean specifically, since your instrumental music doesn't contain any lyrics in which you could verbally process these topics?*

Dustin / Thank you! It all started as a dance piece with choreographer Fukiko Takase, exploring how we could translate these ideas into music and dance. I was left with a lot of music that I thought could exist outside of the dance performance. So, I started working on an album version and I liked the challenge of seeing if the concept could hold up as music alone. I wanted this album to be an experience that could be listened to that would take you through a journey. I think listening to it as a whole creates a kind of narrative you can feel even without words.

***Beat /** So the album is originally based on a ballet/dance piece?*

Dustin / Yes. "1 0 0 1" began in its first incarnation as a dance piece with the choreographer in question. So there was also the language of dance. We had wanted to do something together for a while, and our first conversations were around the ideas brought up in the anime classic "Ghost In The Shell". The ideas of mind-body dualism, the ideas of consciousness and technology and what it will mean for us. We wanted to explore these ideas through music and dance. The visualization of dance is incredibly close to music in the way that it can create feelings without words, and it adds so much dimension to music. We first premiered it right before the pandemic but of course all future shows were canceled. I felt really close to this project. So my idea to release it as a standalone album was to bring it back to life, and also the conversation escalated so quickly since our first premiere, I felt the timing was important.

***Beat /** Are you excited about the future or are you scared of it - given the development of AI?*

Dustin / I think we are heading toward an existential crisis of what it will mean to be human. There are a lot of anxious feelings about it, but I think one of the positive things is that we'll have to understand consciousness better in order to rise to this occasion – to see that we are all part of the human race, what we are truly made of, and how important creative thinking is.

***Beat /** To what extent did you break new ground with "1 0 0 1" and change the way you worked before?*

Dustin / I think first it was really that the ideas were conceptualized before writing, something that I have not really explored, as most of my

» I think that art is ultimately the story of people and how we perceive the world. «

work before is more personal and introspective. And to fully explore electronic soundscapes was exciting, and how I could achieve the same amount of emotion with these new sounds.

Beat / You have worked with violinist Bryan Senti, a choir and the Budapest Art Orchestra. How did you arrange the pieces for this?
Dustin / The first two parts of "1 0 0 1" were written with Bryan Senti, my long-time collaborator. They first based on improvisations and then later it crystallized into something more concrete. But I felt that I wanted to bring more colors into it and have brief moments of something symphonic, which brought me to bring in an orchestra and choir.

Beat / Did you have these elements in mind right from the start when composing or did the pieces grow with the possibilities?
Dustin / When I first started writing for the dance piece, it was the first time I really had a conceived idea of what I wanted to do with the four parts, but how that would sound was a journey to get there. After we finished the recording for the first parts, I realized that I wanted to bring in a choir and orchestra to bring an even more human element to it. I'm really happy with how these turned out. It was my first time writing for a choir, and the human voice is something I have always wanted to work with. It's such a visceral feeling to hear it, as it's really our first instrument. I knew that I wanted the second half of the album to explore electronics, which I did a lot of experimenting with, and it can be a wormhole to fall into as there are so many sound possibilities.

Beat / How did the album come to be divided into a symphonic and an electronic version?
Dustin / The album is actually divided into four parts, and it's meant to be a journey from start to finish. My hope is that people will listen to it in this way. The first two parts are exploring love, nature, and our departure from it. The third explores this idea of where we are in current technology, a sort of hallucinatory experience where it's playful, but we are also hypnotized by it, blinded by any consequence. The final chapter contemplates the implications of a new form of consciousness: it questions the loss of traditional language, explores whether the body is merely a vessel for consciousness, or if consciousness can exist independently of our physical form.

Beat / Which synths shaped the electronic side of the album? Are you part of team analog or digital? At least the album title sounds more digital...
Dustin / I was on both sides for this, but I really wanted even the electronic parts to be very analogue and feel organic. I wanted the whole experience to be human made even if there are parts that don't sound like it. I think that art is ultimately the human story and how we perceive the world, and with art and music now being created with AI, this is my stake in the ground that only we have the unique ability to create something conceptual that can look at ourselves critically and move us.

Beat / How would you describe the influence of your collaborator Paul Corley on the music?
Dustin / Paul and I have worked on a few film projects together, and he has an incredible sensibility for sound design and electronic music, and I really wanted someone who could help me go deeper into the process. We did a lot of sound processing together, but with specific ideas in mind, like what the syntax of a new language would sound like, how we could make this sound unidentifiable. We worked on some percussion ideas that were really a first for me, but I wanted there to be a sense of chaotic interruption, a glitch in the matrix. Experimenting with randomized patterns that could create a sense of feeling overwhelmed digitally.

Beat / What was it like working in your adopted hometown Reykjavík? Did the environment have an influence on the sound?
Dustin / Iceland is a pretty special place to work on music – the desolate landscapes and inescapable wind and cold, you feel so far from the world and there is a lot of headspace to think about things. And I think for this project it gave me time to think about what all this meant transforming it into music and sound.

Beat / What images did you see in your mind when you were composing?
Dustin / It's always hard to describe this as sometimes it's not about imagery but feelings and concepts. But I've been working on visual elements to help translate this. We released our first video for "Spiritus Naturae Aeternus" featuring Fukiko Takase and directed by Markus Englmair, that really captured something incredible, a kind of requiem for nature. I am also working with a digital artist here in Iceland, Owen Hindley, who is working on visuals for the electronic part which I am excited to share soon.

Beat / What exactly did your composition environment look like?
Dustin / We recorded the acoustic parts in Harpa with RRO recording, and an orchestra in Budapest, but I was mostly working in my studio here in Reykjavik with a few sessions in Los Angeles as well. I have my collections of analogue synths here that are always inspiring. I used my vintage Prophet 5 a lot, as well as Korg Ms1, Juno 60, old tape delays, re-amping methods, and then some digital explorations afterwards to create even more layers.

Beat / Speaking of "Ghost In The Shell" ... Do you sometimes have the feeling that there is a ghost in the machines when you make music?
Dustin / Ha! Well, I think the best moments of writing music are when you feel out of your body and channeling something. That's what you hope for, at least.

Beat / Will you continue to combine orchestral and electronic music in the future - perhaps even more within one piece? Which projects are you planning?
Dustin / I have worked on a lot of combining these two with my project "A Winged Victory For The Sullen", and I felt I wanted to explore more electronic ways of working and see if it made sense to my own music. In the end everything is a tool to find a way to express things and I think electronic music can be just as expressive as orchestral music or acoustic music.

www.dustinohalloran.com

Digital Culture: AI

Ironically, AI is mostly a technology which deals with the past. «

For his project MUTUALISMX, Mexican artist Hexorcismos invited a group of sound artists and producers to an intriguing project: Using his self-written software SEMILLA.AI, participants could create AI representations of their artistic persona and then use these to collaborate. The results are diverse and multi-faceted – and they show a path towards a plurality of AI driven by „small" rather than „big data".

by Tobias Fischer

*Beat / **What does intelligence mean in relation to music?***
Hexorcismos / I think that the idea of 'intelligence' has to do more with the concept of labor and time. The time and decisions a musician spent making a composition or an artist an artwork, and how they approached that creation is intelligence. So with this definition, the fact that AI shortens the time and labor needed to create a version of a song or track, in its 'fully automatized' version, for example with text-to-music AI systems, is a symptom of our times.

*Beat / **Could you please describe your personal approach to AI??***
Hexorcismos / My approach to AI, specifically in MUTUALISMX and SEMILLA.AI is to use the technology as reflection of this specific labor and time that went into the creations that make up the datasets which the system was trained on. The tool I've created, SEMILLA.AI, doesn't really produce full-formed tracks; you can think about it as a synthesizer which reflects the features of the artist's dataset, micro-scale textures or rhythmic components.

*Beat / **You've spoken about „decolonising" AI. What kind of biases are there in existing AI when it comes to music?***
Hexorcismos / It is important to note that AI technology is already embedded in many forms of colonization and its legacies. This ranges from the basis of the minerals extracted in Congo, and many other parts of the Global South to power the GPUs used to train AI models, to the massive nonconsensual data scraping in huge models like GPT-4. To talk about decolonization without acknowledging this is difficult. One of the main reasons I got into AI music and neural audio synthesis was precisely to explore the ways that these technologies could be re-appropriated from the biases of the Western canon in music, and honor musical traditions that were not present in AI music research. I'm not striving to mimic these styles of music and genres using machine learning, but rather, to understand and include them in my own music and art making process to create something new.

*Beat / **How do you see the impact of AI on creativity?***
Hexorcismos / One of the most direct impacts of current AI on music composing is that it will make us rethink the act of composing as a whole, the time we spend and iterate on it, and if we really need to stay with the idea of 'fixed media' compositions in general, maybe moving onto compositions as generative and evolving systems. This is what is interesting to me artistically and musically. Right now we are living in a time where anyone could go to a website like Stable Audio and generate a whole album out of just text prompts. This is already a major impact. Without going into the pros vs cons discussion, the fact that at least some kinds of music can be automated in this way should make us rethink the value music has as a whole. And I'm not talking about monetary value, but rather spiritual value.

*Beat / **What does the term composing mean in the era of AI?***
Hexorcismos / I think composing music in the post-AI era will be to understand that these algorithms are just another tool and can be used as an instrument. And like any instrument it has its limitations. In the case of AI, the biases in its dataset - or 'worldview' - and the computing resources required to make them run. Whether musicians should embrace or reject these tools in their craft is not a statement I'm willing to make. But what I would say is that it should be im-

Hexorcismos has been a vocal critic of AI for a while. Now, he has written a free software to change the narrative.

portant to learn how they work, at least on a high level, in order to see if they enable interesting workflows into your own artistic output.

*Beat / **Can you see a future where AI could make aesthetic judgements as well?***
Hexorcismos /I think this is already happening to some extent. We are seeing right now with ChatGPT that some kind of aesthetic is imposed in the way the system replies to or writes an essay or email. The 'default' of these systems is already a sort of aesthetic and it is up to us to see how to either subvert or make it our own; that it reflects the aesthetics we want to see in the world. The danger I see with leaving aesthetic judgment to AI is that it will only be a reflection of its training data. So certain preferences and worldviews will just emerge based on what went into it, leaving us in a sort of „standardization' of culture.

*Beat / **Inviting human artists from all across the planet to collaborate on an AI project for MUTUALISMX is intriguing. What can we learn about AI by using it as part of human interaction?***
Hexorcismos / For MUTUALISMX, I really wanted to flip the current narrative of monolithic AI, a few closed-source AI models, running in a far away datacenter with the artist having no idea of the data that went into training them to a polylithic AI narrative. Here we have instead a plethora of open source AI models, running locally on the collaborating musicians' computer, interacting with them through an interface that is built by a musician, SEMILLA.AI, and using datasets that each collaborator consciously curated. This allowed each musician, whose geographical location could be thousands of miles away, to create a sort of collaboration with another musician's 'AI mutual', explore the patterns embedded in their dataset or even 'become one another' through the generative neural network. Using AI with such an intimate process allow for collaborations that were not possible before.

*Beat / **You've emphasised the „small data" nature of this project, rather than the „big data" the mainstream focuses on. What is „small data?"?***
Hexorcismos / In the pre-production stages of the album, I asked each artist to curate an archive of their musical compositions as a reflection of their 'musical essence' to be embedded in their 'AI Mutual'. The amount of music per artist amounted to about 2-3 hours at most, and it was quite clear which tracks, albums and compositions went into it. Each artist's 'AI Mutual' which they could interact with using SEMILLA.AI, was a reflection of themselves.

*Beat / **SEMILLA.AI is available for download at a very reasonable price. If I were to buy the program, how does it work and what kind of creative process does it encourage?***
Hexorcismos / SEMILLA.AI is actually free to download, the asking price is just a suggested donation to keep the development process going. So it is more than accessible. You'd be able to work with the released AI models that come with it:
· Okachihuali, which has been trained on 3 hours of my previous album of the same name,
· Salterio, which is trained on public domain recordings of the XIX century mexican instrument,
· the Liquid model, which is trained on creative common licensed tracks of liquid Drum and Bass music,
· Cümbüs is trained on recordings made by a friend of the XX century Turkish instrument and the,
· Darbouka, a model trained and released by the IRCAM team who developed the algorithm powering SEMILLA.AI, which is called RAVE: Realtime Audio Variational Autoencoder.

Some of the workflows that are available to you right when downloading would be to perform 'timbre transfer', where you would drag and drop your own sounds into the interface and transform them into the stylistic qualities of the AI model you've got loaded.

*Beat / **How does this work in practise?***
Hexorcismos / Let's say you input a drum loop and you have the 'okachihuali' model loaded, your drums would gain the texture of that AI model. Moving the parameters would allow you to change the quality and features of how the model transforms your sound. You could also just move the parameters and explore the 'latent space' of the model to create textures which resemble the features of the training data. Using the 'seed bank' you can save these coordinates in the latent space and then interpolate within them, creating a more curated approach to the sounds you like from the AI model. You can also just record the sounds directly and improvise with SEMILLA.AI as an instrument. That is the main idea of it: that it allows you to navigate, explore and have an active listening experience with this type of AI algorithm. Hopefully that in itself is a fun thing for musicians!

*Beat / **As part of your work, you fed AI with your work. What was your feeling of experiencing an AI create with your own fingerprint like?***
Hexorcismos / The feeling of working with my own AI model, trained on my own music, is like having a sort of specter creating and synthesizing echoes of my past creations. Ironically, AI is mostly a technology which deals with the past; a sort of mathematical abstraction of the past in order to create something new. That's why I think a 'fully automated' approach to AI is not really the way to create novel music with these tools. It is the randomness and intention that an artist brings into the composition process - how to steer the model and what sort of sounds to use from its output, to combine many AI models together and so on - that keeps the process interesting for me.

*Beat / **From the participating artists' response, was this sensation of one's identity blurring pleasurable, inspiring - scary?***
Hexorcismos / Some of the comments I've received from the collaborators was that their AI model was some sort of ghost, creating a 'foggy version of themselves' while working on their contribution. I cannot speak for everybody, but to hear the album as a whole, it amazes me that the plurality of musical styles was preserved while there was a certain cohesiveness that emerged from everybody using the SEMILLA.AI synth. For me, this poses more questions about the role of AI in music than it provides answers.

www.instagram.com/hexorcismos/
otherpeople.bandcamp.com/album/mutualismx

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Software Highlight: RetroMod Digital 1

Synth & Vaporwave master

The PPG Wave series, Korg's DW series and the Prophet VS ... friends of the dazzling synth sounds of the 80s are sure to get bright eyed at these names. These hybrids with digital oscillators and analog filters are legendary for their flowing pads, harsh basses, metallic electric piano sounds and sawing leads. Experience their magic anew with RetroMod Digital 1! by Mario Schumacher

All under control
You can use the icons in the header of RetroMod Digital 1 to switch between the preset browser, the main page and the effects section.

Effects? Of course!
You can put your sound through the wringer with the effects. An EQ and four effect slots with distortion, chorus, phaser, compressor, filter, delay and three reverb variations await you here.

Filters and envelopes
At the top right you'll find a lowpass filter with three modes, which can also deliver cutting sounds at high resonance values. With the arpeggiator, you can quickly and easily create basslines or hypnotic arpeggios.

Oscillators
RetroMod Digital 1 comes with two oscillators. Each of the 367 presets offers two waveforms that you can tune and mix as you wish. Ring and frequency modulation expand the spectrum with metallic and discordant sounds.

Virtual Vector Stick
Do you want to bring your sounds to life? Then you should definitely try out the X/Y pad, which allows you to influence several parameters at the same time. It can also be controlled with an MPE-compatible controller.

REGISTRATION & INSTALLATION

You can register RetroMod Digital 1 via www.serialcenter.de. You will receive an activation code which you can then redeem at www.tracktion.com/beat2024. In your Tracktion account, you can then download the download manager to install RetroMod Digital 1.

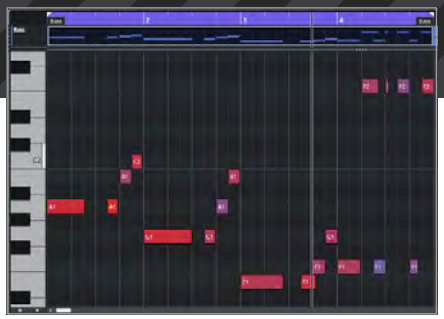
[1] www.overloud.com

1 Chord basis

Tracktion RetroMod Digital 1 is a real secret weapon for Synth Pop tracks with eighties charm. Fancy giving it a try? Let's start by creating a chord base for the track. Load RetroMod Digital 1, open the browser and select an arpeggio preset such as Cello Arp. We then program the simple sequence A minor, G major, E minor and F major.

2 Old-school arpeggio

This leaves plenty of room for melodies. Experiment with the synth and arpeggiator parameters as you wish. Next, we add a bass sound to the arpeggio. To do this, we load another instance of RetroMod Digital 1 with the **Performance Bass** patch. To make the bass sound less muffled, we turn up the cutoff control slightly.



3 Bassline

In this preset, the modulation wheel controls the Resonance. This allows you to add beautiful accents to your bassline. Speaking of bassline: Now you can play in a line that matches your chords. In our line, the bass plays the root notes of the chords. We add transition notes and small ornaments before the chord changes. Time for a Pad!

4 Lay pads

Load a third instance of RetroMod Digital 1 with the Chowning's Pad preset. The Pad plays the same chords as the arpeggio. Try out different positions of the chord tones to create space for the other elements. If you want, you can also turn pad sounds into arpeggios by setting the volume envelope to percussive.

5 Develop melody

Then, activate the Arpeggiator and adjust it as desired. What's still missing? Of course, a lead melody! For this, we use the Emulator Memories preset and add effects as desired. Now it's time to record a memorable melody. Start with a simple sequence of notes that matches the arpeggio and bassline and build on it.

6 Lead hook

Try out different rhythms and melodies. We use the notes of the key of C major for our hook. By repeating short motifs, the melody sticks in the ear and small variations provide variety. Experiment with your hook until it harmonizes well with the chord changes, and the harmonies and melody form a cohesive unit.

7 Sound accents

How about a wacky sound that provides effective accents? We use the Sofis FM patch to create a suitable piano-like sound. First, we copy the lead melody to this track. Then, adjust the Filter parameters and the Envelopes as shown in the picture. Activate the Digital Section and set the sample rate control to the middle.

8 Sound explorations

We now want to play sound variations with the X/Y pad. Reduce X Axis sample rate as shown and turn up FM Pitch. Move the circle symbol in the pad horizontally. This affects the sample rate and the pitch of the frequency modulation. On the vertical side, you can control the intensity of the Ring and Frequency Modulation.

9 Effect refinement

You can also record or automate these movements if your DAW supports this. This makes creating crazy sound variations, such as for a drop or a break, child's play. To fill out the melody rhythmically, we bring a delay effect into play in the effects section, with a delay time of a dotted eighth note.

Power Producer: FL Studio

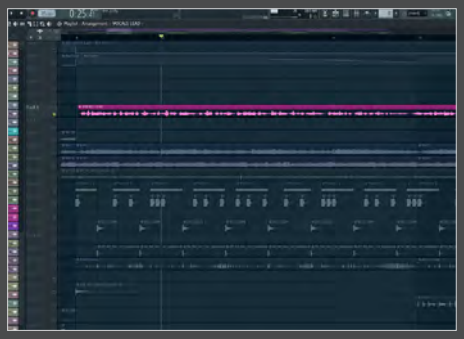
The trick for brilliant vocals

In the world of music production, the quality of vocal recordings is crucial for a convincing and professional sound. But even the most talented singers can run into a common problem: Hissing sounds, also known as sibilants. The following six steps explain how to solve this problem in FL Studio.

by Ruben Mantel

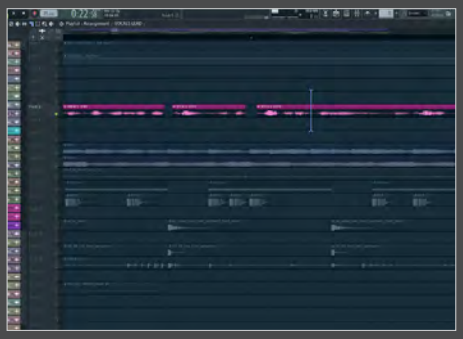
Project info

Material: Fruity Loops Studio 21
Time required: 25 minutes
Content: De-essing vocals with stock plugins.
Difficulty: Advanced



1 Vocal recording

Once again, the foundation for a flawless vocal mix lies in the careful **preparation** of the vocal recording. Start by making sure that your microphone is optimally **positioned** and that a **pop filter** is used to minimize plosive sounds. This creates the ideal starting point for clear and pleasant vocals.



2 Edit vocals

The next step is to **precisely edit** the vocals. Distracting breathing or smacking noises can often be eliminated by simply cutting them away. A precise cut focuses on the essentials and forms the basis for the subsequent editing steps. However, make sure you only cut away the really unnecessary parts.

3 Subtractive equalizing

Subtractive equalizing is crucial in identifying and reducing the interfering frequencies. Use the **fruity parametric EQ 2** from FL -Studio to search for the characteristic sibilants in the range from **5 kHz to 10 kHz**. Reduce these frequencies slightly without affecting the vocals.

4 Additive equalizing

In contrast to subtractive equalizing, the aim now is to increase the volume of **certain frequencies** so that the contrast to the harsh, disturbing frequencies of the sibilants is no longer too great. To do this, use the **fruity parametric EQ 2** again to boost the fundamental tones of the voice between **70** and **150 Hz** by **1** to **5 dB**.

5 Maximus as a de-esser

Now we come to a plugin that was specially designed to reduce the volume of disturbing S-sounds. A de-esser is basically just a multiband compressor that dynamically reduces the volume in the frequency range of the S-sounds. Use the internal **Maximus** multiband compressor and select the **preset De-Esser split-band**.

6 Caution! Lisp

As always in music, it's also about finding the **perfect balance**. Try to find the golden mean between piercing S-sounds that almost hurt the ear and S-sounds whose volume has been reduced so much that it sounds as if the singer is lisping. Use the **Mix** and **Threshold controls** to help you with this.

Power Producer: Logic Pro X

Sound like the stars – Part 1/3

The hit song „Stay“ by The Kid LAROI and Justin Bieber was released almost three years ago. Hit song is an understatement, as the track now has its own Wikipedia entry. We show you how you can easily recreate the song-defining synth sound of „Stay“ with Logic's on-board tools. **by Stefan Hofmann**

Project info

Material: Logic Pro X (Version 10.8.1)
Time required: 35 minutes
Content: Recreate the synth sound of Stay.
Difficulty: Advanced

1 RetroSynth

First, we'll play the sounds of the song that you can find in the download files of this workshop. The original sound was created with the Roland Juno retro synth, so we open Logic's RetroSynth instrument and stay in the analog oscillator. We set Shape 1 to Squarewave at a value of around 49 percent. We set Shape 2 to sawtooth.

2 Filter and Chorus

Next, we move on to the filter section. We set the Cutoff to 0.400 while dragging the Key parameter relatively far down. This controls the effect that the pitch of the keyboard note has on the cutoff frequency of the filter. Now, set the effect section to chorus and leave it at the default setting.

3 Modulation

We then need to adjust the filter envelope and the volume envelope. In the filter envelope section, we make the parameter settings A: 0.40 ms, D: 430 ms, S: 0.00, R: 270 ms. The AMP envelope comes with the values A: 0.64 ms, D: 9700 ms, S: 0.21, R 30.0 ms. We leave all other parameters in their default settings.

4 Other effects

Now we have the basic sound of the retro synth sound of „Stay“, but we need to add a few effects to create the sound of the track. If you listen closely to the track, you'll notice that the synth has been equipped with a delay effect. We create a bus and set the send to -8.9.

5 Delay and Reverb

Now we load the echo plugin from Logic and set the „Note“ tab to 1/8. Feedback is set to 64 percent, while we set dry to 0 percent and wet to 100 percent. We are now getting very close to the original sound, but our version still sounds a little too dry. A second bus is needed and we set its send to around -13.5.

6 Fine tuning

We equip the second bus with the Space Designer and load the preset 1.8_Large & Brite. The basic settings already fit the song very well, but we also have to set dry to 0 percent and wet to 100 percent. Last but not least, we equip our synth with the channel EQ and set a low cut at 99 Hz - done.

Power Producer: Cubase

Compose epic tracks

Since version 13, Cubase has integrated its own orchestra with Iconica Sketch, which is always ready to play. Fancy using it to produce a complete epic track? In our multi-part workshop, we will show you step by step how to compose a complete epic piece of music based on a simple piano sketch.

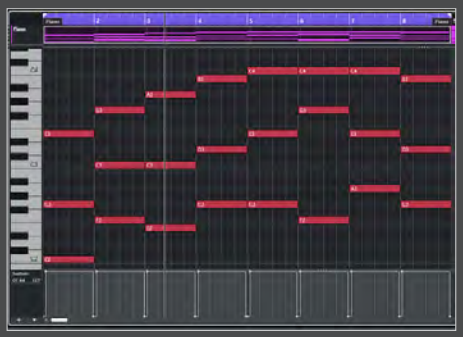
by Vera Schumacher

Project info

Material: Cubase Elements, Artist, Pro
Time required: From 30 minutes
Content: Create an epic track with Iconica Sketch.
Difficulty: Beginner and Advanced

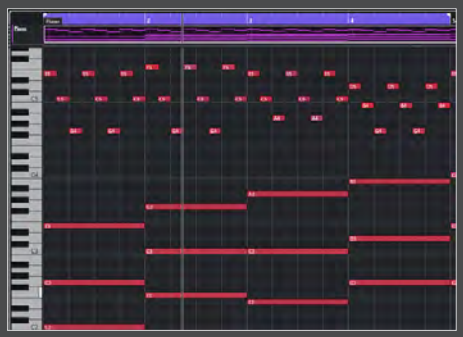
1 Piano as a basis

To create the basis for an epic track, many composers start with a simple piano sketch, consisting of a chord sequence that is supplemented by melodies. And that's exactly what we're going to do. First, load HALion Sonic 7 as a VST instrument and select a suitable piano preset such as **Warm Grand**. Now it's time to get creative!



2 Chord progression

Try out some progressions on your MIDI keyboard or with Cubase's Chord Pads. For captivating chord progressions, it's worth going beyond the classic major and minor harmonies, so experiment with augmented, diminished, sus chords or seventh and ninth chords for more drama and depth.



3 Ostinato

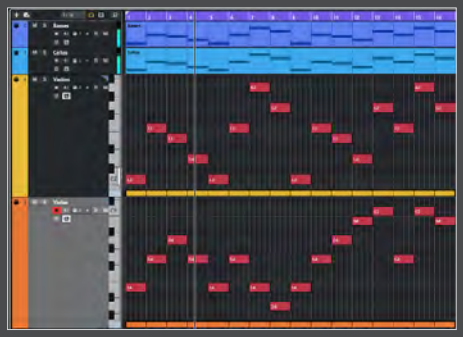
For our example track, we chose the chord sequence: C major, F Sus2, A minor and G major, which conveys a mixture of hope and melancholy. We play the chords in a wide range. String ostinatos are used in many epic pieces of music. In the high register, you can play a suitable eighth-note ostinato with the piano.

4 Instrumentation

Now it's time to turn the piano sketch into an epic track. Load another HALion Sonic instance and select the **Iconica Sketch** library. Load the basses instrument and select the **Legato** articulation. The double basses should play the chord root notes. Create a MIDI track and copy the MIDI part of the piano to it.

5 Double basses & cellos

Mute all notes except the lowest notes and octave them if necessary so that the bass sounds defined. Continue with the **Cellos**, which should double the double basses in the **Legato** playing style. Load the corresponding preset into Slot 2 of HALion Sonic 7, to which MIDI Channel 2 is already assigned. Copy the **Bass** track.



6 Violins & violas

Set MIDI Channel 2 for these and transpose the notes up an octave. You can distribute the other two chord tones to the **Violins** and **Violas** as described above. Select the **Legato** articulation here, too. In the next issue, we will supplement the string chords with further elements such as a String Ostinato and Brass.

Power Producer: Ableton Live

Airy Ambient pads with Meld

Live 12 comes with the new bi-timbral synthesizer, Meld, a real wonder weapon for sound designers. Its complex modulation options and the resulting lively sounds make it ideal for making Ambient sounds. This workshop will show you how to use the synth for your sound design by creating an Ambient Pad. by Maya C. Sternel

Project info

Material: Ableton Live Suite 12
Time required: 30 minutes
Content: Sound design of an Ambient Pad with Meld, edit sounds in Engines and modulate various parameters using the Matrix, create more stereo width using Spread Modulation and stereo effects.
Difficulty: Advanced

1 Ambient chords

Load the MIDI synth, Meld, into a track. Select **Swarm Sine** as the style for Engine A from the dropdown menu. Create an 8-bar MIDI clip. Program a chord extending over 4 bars in the first and 5th bar. Choose the chords so that they are similar, for example, Dmaj7 and Fm7, and so there are no large jumps when changing chords.

2 Set the envelope

Activate the Link switch to the left of Envelopes so that both engines use Envelope A. Select 80 ms for **Attack** and 600 ms for **Release**. To get the sound moving, the two macro controls, **Motion** and **Spacing** of LFO 1, should be modulated. To do this, open the matrix view using the small icon on the left side of Meld and drag it to a larger size.

3 Modify LFO

Select the motion macro control with a mouse click. **Osc Macro 1** is now highlighted in the Matrix. Move to the right in the row of boxes to below LFO 1. Start the clip and set the value to 19. Select LFOs in the device view. Set LFO 1 to **Sync** and the **Rate** to 2. Set **Fold** to 30 so that the waveform of the LFO is now also modulated.

4 Modulation matrix

Now select **Spacing** and set the Macro control to 9.7. In the Matrix, you will see that **Osc Macro 2** is now highlighted. Select a value of 7.8 for the modulation by LFO 1. Give the sound a little more width and set **Spread** to **16%**. Then, select **Noisy Shapes** as the style for Engine B from the Dropdown Menu. Set **Shape** and **Rough** to 40.

5 Modulate Engine B

To attenuate the high frequency components, select a value around 600 Hz for the Cutoff Frequency of Filter B. The next step is to modulate **Rough** using LFO 1. First, select the Rough macro control and then set the modulation value for LFO 1 to 12 in the matrix for Engine B. Optionally, map other parameters in the Matrix.

6 Stereo effects

To give the sound even more space and depth, load the Chorus Ensemble effect into the track. Select a value of 24% for **Feedback**. Next, load the Echo effect behind it. Set **Dry/Wet** to 65%. Set the Delay Mode to **Time** and the Delay Time to 300 ms, **Feedback** to 50%, **Reverb** to 68% and optionally the Channel Mode to **Mid/Side**.

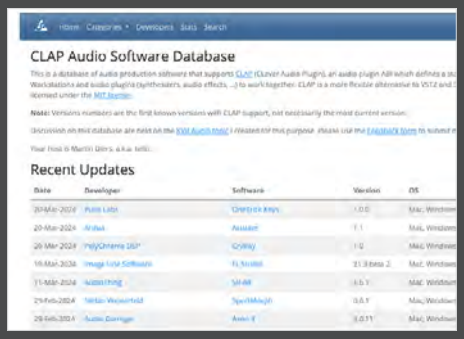
Power Producer: Bitwig Studio

Polyphonic modulation w/ CLAP

The CLAP standard aims to do many things better than VST. CLAP plug-ins are more resource-efficient, can be scanned more quickly by the DAW and, above all, can be polyphonically modulated. We will take a look at what this means in this workshop. You can check the clapdb.tech website to see if your favorite plugin is already included. We're going to try it out today with the free synth „SurgeXT". by Laura Emiliano

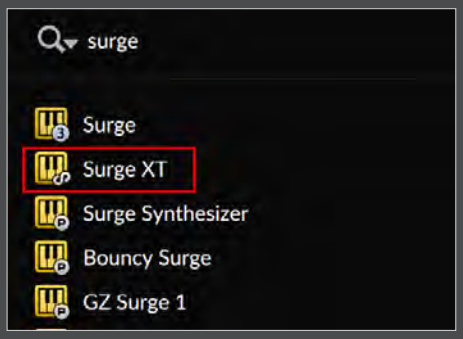
Project info

Material: Bitwig Studio 5, SurgeXT (Freeware)
Time required: 30-60 minutes
Content: Polyphonic modulation with plug-ins in CLAP format.
Difficulty: Advanced



1 Polyphonic modulation

Virtual Instruments have a disadvantage to real instruments when it comes to chords: effects like attenuating frequencies via the filter cutoff or panning always affect all „voices" or MIDI notes in the same way. With plugins like SurgeXT, which is available in CLAP format, and DAWs such as Bitwig, which support CLAP, you can change this using polyphonic modulation.



2 SurgeXT in Bitwig Studio

Each MIDI note of a chord can have a different cutoff modulation, for example, or move differently in the stereo field via panning modulation. It is important that you have at least Bitwig Studio 5.1 and the latest version of SurgeXT installed. You also need to load the synth in CLAP format, which is recognizable by the CLAP logo.

3 Building chords

Now you need chords. You can either play them in via your MIDI keyboard or program them in a clip. To ensure that the modulations that we are about to create are easy to hear, long chords are well suited, that is, at least over one bar in length. Two-part chords are also sufficient to start with.

4 Filter in SurgeXT

As we want to polyphonically modulate the cutoff in the SurgeXT filter first, the filter must first be activated there. In SurgeXT, set Filter 1 to LP24, that is, a low-pass filter. Then, set the cutoff directly below it to approximately 500 Hertz. To make the modulation even more audible, turn resonance to 50 percent.

5 Random module

Now open the **Show Modulators** section in the track header in Bitwig. Click on the plus in the top field and select the Random module from the list. Turn the smooth control to 100% and set the trigger **note** at the bottom. Now, briefly click on the cutoff control in SurgeXT so that it appears next to the random module in the list.

6 Modulation party

Now, click on the small green arrow in the Bitwig Random module. It flashes and is ready to connect. Click and drag upwards, next to the cutoff parameter. Each note now has its own cutoff value. Repeat the whole thing with panning and resonance. This type of modulation per note is only possible with CLAP plug-ins.

Epic effect sounds for trailers and Epic music

Home-made brutal braams

In the world of film music and particularly in Trailers, hardly any other sound achieves such a serious and dramatic effect as „Braams". In addition to heavily processed brass sounds, synthesizer sounds are also often used, which assert themselves in every mix thanks to brutal distortion, compression and limiting. Well then, let's build a braam sound! by Vera Schumacher

Project info:

Material: FabFilter Pro-Q 3, Saturn, Pro-R 2, Audio file from the magazine data or your own synth sound.
Time required: From 30 minutes
Content: Create a brutal Braam sound for Trailers and Epic Music from a simple synthesizer sound.
Difficulty: Advanced

1 Creating resonance

As a basic sound, we will use a simple synth sound on the E note that we created with FabFilter Twin 3. Simply load the audio file „Twin3-Signal.wav" into your project. This sound uses two slightly detuned sawtooth waveforms. Before we run it through the distortion unit, we give it some snappy resonance.

2 Get the resonance right

You can shape these with an upstream equalizer such as FabFilter Pro-Q 3. Load the **Default Setting** preset. Create a filter band and select the **High Cut** type for it. Turn up the resonance fully and double-click the **Freq** control to enter **E5**. This sets the filter frequency to the corresponding frequency.

3 Distortion

Next up is the Saturn 2 distortion plug-in. Select the **Heavy Saturation** mode and turn the **Drive** control to around **50%**. We also use the **Tone** controls to slightly increase the upper mids and highs of the sound. To distort our braam sound even more, we also increase the **Input Gain** by 10 dB.

4 Epic Hall

If it gets too loud, you can compensate for this with the **Output Gain** control. To make the sound really epic, it also needs a good dose of reverb. An easy exercise for Pro-R 2! Here too, we start with the **Default Setting** and increase **Space** to **8.00s** for a lush reverb. Then, turn up **Thickness** and **Distance** to the maximum.

5 Shape signal

Set **Mix** to **25%** and also adjust the two EQ curves as shown to filter out the low frequencies of the Reverb signal. Our Braam sound has a lot of energy in the very low frequencies. To make room for musical elements such as sub bass, booms and impacts, we load another instance of the Pro-Q 3.

6 Sound variations

We use this to filter out the frequencies below 70 Hz with a **Low Cut** Filter. Of course, you can also use the EQ to further shape the signal and tame over-present mids, for example. Now the braam is in the box! Want some variations? It's worth trying out different distortion types from Saturn such as **Old Tape** or **Rectify**.

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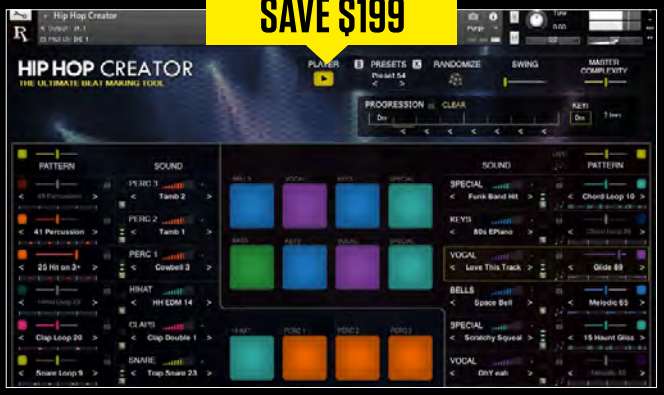

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New freeware plug-ins

by Jan Wilking

Integraudio
Blowdio

Blowdio aims to recreate the saturation effects and harmonic distortion of an analog tape machine and offers four different options. In the Studio Version, a well-maintained hi-end tape machine is emulated with new tape, and the sonic effects are, accordingly, rather subtle. After all, in earlier times, the hardware had the task of recording as cleanly and with as little distortion as possible, and expensive studio machines were the best way to achieve this. Nowadays, however, the unwanted artifacts are what we want to hear from a tape emulation. Cinematic has a bit more character, but we liked the Lofi and Vintage modes even better. Here, the incoming audio signal is unmistakably clipped in frequency, saturated and distorted. You can influence the level of saturation with the Drive control, and typical noise and fluctuations can be added using Dust and Flutter. As a little treat, the virtual tape head can even be readjusted.

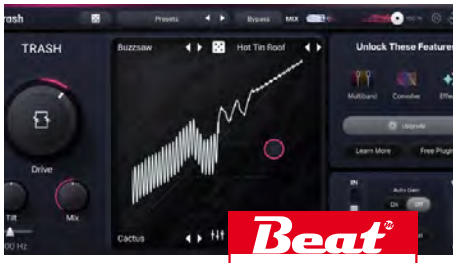
We generally like the sonic character that Blowdio adds to the audio signal. The more powerful variants, in particular, bring the lofi sound that is so popular in many current music styles and give more life to clean and digital-sounding audio sources. The effect works best on digital sound generators with a rather high sound load, for example, wavetable synths such as Serum and Vital or FM synthesizers. This is because Blowdio cuts off a lot of high frequencies and, as a result, tends to produce rather muffled results.

Verdict

The tape emulation is particularly impressive with its characteristic lofi sound, paired with simple operation and flexible detailed settings.

Developer: Integraudio
Web: integraudio.com
Price: Freeware
Format: VST3

Rating:



Beat MUST-HAVE 06/2024

iZotope
Trash Lite

iZotope Trash is one of the best known and most popular plug-ins for all kinds of distortion, from light saturation to classic distortion and creative sound destruction. Trash has now been completely overhauled (quasi Trash 3, even if iZotope simply calls the new edition Trash). This new version is not entirely uncontroversial, as some of the creative elements of its predecessors have been rationalized away in favour of more straightforward operation. From the freeware user's point of view, however, the new edition has one major advantage: Trash Lite is a slimmed-down version for free!

Although this freeware version, understandably, does not have the range of functions of the commercial version, it sounds just as good and benefits from the simplified operation of the new user interface. The Trash module is located in the center, where you can set the Type of distortion, Strength, Tone and Mix. There are 60 different distortion modes available. If this large selection overwhelms you at first, you can choose from any number of ready-made presets or use the Random Generator to create new effects. The built-in Limiter and Auto Gain ensure that there is no danger to speakers or ears even at extreme settings and that the effect can be integrated into your mixes.

Verdict

Although you have to do without certain special functions, such as Multiband processing, Convolution Reverb and additional effects with Trash Lite, the plug-in, which specializes in distortion, otherwise offers the sound of the legendary Izotope Trash for free and, therefore, gets our clear recommendation.

Developer: iZotope
Web: izotope.com
Price: Freeware
Format: VST, AU, AAX, iOS

Rating:

LIM
TheMasker

LIM stands for the Laboratorio di Informatica Musicale at the University of Milan, and students from the Development of Music Production Technologies course are the developers of TheMasker. The plug-in is used to detect and attenuate overlapping frequencies of audio tracks playing in parallel in order to prevent the resulting „masking", that is, suppression of frequencies. Every music producer is probably familiar with this problem: at the beginning, the kick is clean and defined in the bass range, and then the bass is added and the kick suddenly sounds quieter and punchless, although the track actually remains just as loud. This is due to the overlapping frequencies and can be dealt with manually using dynamic equalizers such as TDR Nova, Fabfilter Pro-Q3 or Steinberg Frequency. Or you can have this job done automatically, for example, with Wavesfactory Trackspacer or the TheMasker presented here. To do this, place the plug-in on an audio track, such as bass or strings. You can then use the sidechain to loop in the audio track that should have more space in the mix, like the kick or the vocals. The plug-in analyzes both tracks and dynamically lowers the overlapping frequencies of the bass or strings whenever the kick or vocals can be heard. TheMasker displays this effect nicely visualized and also allows you to adjust the strength of the correction.

Verdict

Even though Wavefactory Trackspacer sounds a little cleaner and more transparent to our ears, TheMasker is a very interesting freeware alternative for dynamically correcting overlapping frequencies and, thus, automatically tidying up the mix.

Developer: LIM
Web: lim.di.unimi.it
Price: Freeware
Format: VST,AU,Standalone

Rating:

New synths & software

by Vera Schumacher

Rob Papen
Albino-3 Legend

Do you still remember Albino? Over 22 years ago, Rob Papen and LinPlug created this software synthesizer, which established itself as one of the top alternatives to virtual analogue hardware such as Access Virus & the like. Since LinPlug stopped developing plug-ins a few years ago, nobody really expected an update. Visually, the synthesizer has barely changed, but a few improvements have been made under the hood: it now supports the VST3 standard and modern operating systems and processors and offers various GUI sizes. Support for the NKS format is also in the works.

The strengths of Albino-3, such as the versatile oscillators with analog and digital waveforms, as well as noise generators and the four characteristic stereo filters, have been retained. As usual, Rob Papen is very generous with modulation options; and the flexible arpeggiator is a wonderful source of musical ideas. And since you can layer four sounds in one preset, creating enormously fat and complex sounds is easy. One minor drawback is that the update does not include any groundbreaking new features for sound generation. But who knows, maybe this will come in Version 4?

Verdict

Albino-3 Legend also performs well in 2024 and now integrates seamlessly into the modern DAW studio, thanks to the update. Its sound evokes pleasant memories of the virtual-analog sound aesthetics of the late 90s and early 2000s. One of the main arguments for buying a Rob Papen synth is always the huge range of ingenious presets and, in this discipline, Albino-3 Legend scores across the board.

Developer: Rob Papen
Web: www.robpapen.com
Price: 99 Euro, Update from Albino-3: 49 Euro
Format: VST2, VST3, AU, AAX

Rating:

Sample Logic
World Fury

Have you ever dreamed of expanding your musical horizons and enhancing your tracks with a wealth of exotic sounds? Then World Fury from Sample Logic could be just the thing for you. This sample instrument for Kontakt gives you access to a gigantic library of 380 multi-sampled instruments. It includes wind and string instruments, as well as pianos, strings and vocals. For the vocals, short sung syllables of female and male vocalists from different countries were captured. Synth sounds in all shapes and colors such as basses, leads, pads and evolving textures are also represented.

The user interface in World Fury is colorful and inviting. The preset browser can be accessed by way of a button at the top right. Strictly speaking, there are two browsers: one for instruments, that is, presets with a multi-sample, all sound parameters and effects; and one for the sound sources themselves. Thanks to the Multi-Tag system, the desired presets or sounds can be found quickly. The favorites function and the option to save your own presets are also practical. The GUI in World Fury also features settings options for volume, pan position and velocity, a simple Envelope, as well as a lowpass and a highpass filter. This allows you to shape sounds quickly and easily to your liking. The lowpass filter offers adjustable resonance and can also be influenced by velocity. LFOs are accessible via pop-up menus, allowing you to create lively modulations for both volume and filter frequencies.

On the effects side of World Fury, a total of 22 effects are waiting to refine your sounds or put them through the wringer. These can be loaded in six slots. You can choose from EQ, various filter models including formant and vowel, modulation effects, reverb, delay, compressor and transient designer. It's not just the guitar sounds that benefit from the wide range of distortion, lofi and saturation effects. Almost all effects have their own modulation sequencer to control parameters such as the intensity of the saturation, the filter frequency or the amount of delay or reverb. Want to be inspired? The intelligent Random function in World Fury generates a new sound variation at the touch of a button, whereby the instrument, the sound source and the effects can be influenced.

It is not easy to name highlights in view of the diverse library: I particularly liked the multi-faceted Flutes and string instruments such as mandolin, dobro, qanun, santoor and shamisen. But the hybrid presets are also incredibly inspiring. For instance, when celtic chanting or a chinese bamboo flute becomes an ethereal pad. It's great fun to explore the variety of sounds. It's just a shame that the instruments don't offer different articulations. An apreggiator would also be a great addition. World Fury unfolds its full potential when you playfully bring the expressive and dynamic instruments to life and create atmospheric arrangements with several instances.

Verdict

World Fury takes you on an adventure through the soundscapes of different cultures. What would it sound like if you could mix the warm tones of a Celtic Harp with distorted synth drums and the hypnotic sound of the Georgian beak flute Salamuri? The answer: incredibly inspiring! An option to layer sounds would have been great, but this can also be realized with Kontakt's on-board tools. The instrument's user interface focuses on the essentials and impresses with its intuitive operation and effective sound editing options. Top!

Developer: Sample Logic
Web: www.samplelogic.com
Price: 49 US Dollars
Format: Kontakt Player or Kontakt from 6.7.1

Rating:

Test: DAACI Natural Drums

The British start-up DAACI, which specializes in AI technology for music production, hit the headlines back in September 23. Now their first product, DAACI Natural Drums, has been launched as a beta version. by Heiner Kruse

Features

Beta tool for the automated creation of drum patterns

AI implementation

Beta participation delivers a discount when the full version is released

AU MIDI effect and VST3 instrument for Mac

Facts

Developer: DAACI
Web: www.daaci.com
Distribution: Download
Price: 18 Euro for the time-limited Beta, discounts on full version

- ▲ Intuitive creation of drum patterns
- ▲ Separate processing of three practical categories
- ▲ MIDI export
- ▲ Pattern storage
- ▲ Three patterns can be combined
- ▲ Import your own-samples
- ▼ Pricing still uncertain

Versatility:
Operation:
Price/Perf:
Total:

Alternatives

Logic Drummer
229 Euro
apple.de

Rayzoon Jamstiix 4
$0 - 229 US Dollars
rayzoon.com

Natural Drummer is an easy-to-use tool for creating drum patterns.

The company emphasizes that musicians' skills are the inspiration for algorithms. In practice, Natural Drums is a MIDI plug-in that is worth taking a closer look at. It generates drum patterns based on settings and does not (yet) have its own sound generation. The result is a new production technique that may soon become the norm: You change settings, listen and observe how the results change and can intervene manually if necessary. Here, people should be able to make music (faster) with the tool and not the other way around. Important setting options include the complexity ("Complex") and the intensity ("Busy") for kick and snare.

Comparison with Logic's Drummer

Sound familiar to you? That's right, Logic's Drummer also has such settings, which can sound very natural. „Natural Drums" aims to achieve something similar without any great spectacle, has this goal in its name and has advantages in comparison. In DAACI Natural Drums, I feel that the AI process is better interwoven with manual edits, and both can easily be used in combination. To do this, simply activate the „Manual" button briefly, edit and then go back again. „Natural Drummer" also masters MIDI export using drag & drop. Using AI in Natural Drums feels like calling up a preset that can be modified in real time.

Three sound layers and three patterns

I always found it amusing in Logic's Drummer that there is an „Automatic Halftime" button for the virtual Hip Hop drummer. And indeed, DAACI Natural Drums also has such a mode, but here you can make the halftime setting separately for the kick & snare, hats and fills layers. The plug-in divides the generation of beats into these three categories and allows you to make your own adjustments: there are independent options for creating random results. You will also find customized special tools for each category, such as a „Trapify" option for quickly played Hi-Hats, realistic Tom settings for Fills (Descend, Anticipate) or the insertion of a short „4 on the floor" beat section in the kick & snare area. In the test, most of the results sounded natural and musically sensible. The whole thing seems quite simple in the early Beta stage, but convincing. Another important factor for „natural" sounding results with „Natural Drums" is the use of three one-bar patterns A, B and C, which can be nested in four bars. There are eight easy-to-understand options for this, for example: AAAB, ABAB, ABAC, ABCC.

A MIDI tool (- so far) without sound generation

Natural Drums (so far) lacks an internal sound generator and, therefore, also the option of linking patterns to drum kits in presets. The plug-in is, nevertheless, loaded as a VST3 instrument, but in Logic as AU MIDI FX.

This deficit can be turned into an advantage because you have to search for matching drums in order to come up with a new, individual result, so I have not listed this as a minus point here. The sound assignment is the same for many drum kits according to the GM standard and easy to use, but if required, you can also assign your own notes in Natural Drums for the use of other kits.

Verdict

DAACI Natural Drums is a minimalist MIDI generator for drums in the early beta stage, which I see here as a modern and user-friendly version of an AI tool. The results sound authentic and musical and it's fun to program beats with them. For 18 Euro you can take part in the Beta phase, which runs until May; and then, according to DAACI, take advantage of various discounts, including for other offers. I have not yet been able to find out how much the full product will cost. At least it has been hinted that an internal sound generator will soon be added in a newer Beta version. It will be interesting to see.

NATURAL DRUMS
More Info

Test: Best Service The Score

With The Score, Best Service and Sonuscore have created a sample instrument that aims to tell great stories with a combination of large orchestral sounds, as well as band and world instruments and synthesizer sounds. Well, let's give it a careful listen! by Vera Schumacher

Whether it's in films or series, in books or in music: nothing captivates us as much as gripping storytelling. In music production, it is the sound colors and arrangements that tell the story without words. This is where The Score comes in - a sampling instrument that allows composers to transform their musical vision into impressive acoustic narratives.

You have 160 instruments at your disposal for creating these musical sounds, ranging from classical orchestral sounds to band, world and percussion instruments and even synthesizer sounds. These are available as separate Kontakt instruments. You can lose yourself in the variety of sounds and the almost endless combination possibilities of these patches alone. World instruments, in particular, can add a lot of color to orchestral arrangements; and the synthesizer sounds are ideal for creating a dense atmosphere.

Acoustic storytelling

The Ensemble Kontakt Instrument is the core of The Score and offers the opportunity to create multi-faceted arrangements. The 130 pre-programmed stories are animated presets, each with four different arrangements, with which you can quickly and effectively compose music in different genres, moods and time signatures. Each story consists of up to 10 instruments, each of which can play its own pattern.

You can swap instruments as you wish or develop your own stories. In the Chord Studio, you can flexibly edit which chord progression should be played; and in the sequencer, you can define which instrument plays which chord note. In addition, the velocity can be fine-tuned for each track by setting minimum and maximum values. This allows you to switch between different arrangements within your story and dynamically adjust the intensity of the music using the modulation wheel. How about, for example, starting with a gentle introductory theme of piano and soft strings that builds to a full orchestral crescendo and ends in a dramatic finale? Each of the ten instruments within a story can also be individually processed with high-quality effects such as EQ, filter, dynamics, distortion, delay, modulation, compressor and reverb.

With its fusion of orchestral, band and world instruments, as well as atmospheric synthesizer sounds, The Score has huge creative potential.

Follow the leader

The lead instrument specializes in developing its own melodies to carry the central themes and emotions of a piece. Two instruments can be layered here and individually enhanced with effects. The musical heart of this Kontakt instrument is the Melody Studio, in which you can generate a new theme at the touch of a button. You can adjust parameters such as the complexity and rhythm of the melody, as well as the probability of note repetitions, triplets and chord tones. The results are absolutely impressive. As there is also a MIDI export function here, just like in the Ensemble instrument, you can further edit your creations in your DAW.

As a remarkably versatile combination of expressive instruments and sounds and powerful scoring tools, The Score is virtually unrivaled. Its colleagues from Best Service and Sonuscore, such as The Orchestra Complete 3 and Elysion 2, come closest to this sample instrument. These focus purely on classical orchestral sounds and atmospheric synthesizer sounds.

Verdict

Although The Score cannot replace the subtleties of detailed orchestral compositions, it scores high marks as a valuable source of musical ideas. With its high sound quality and variety of instruments, it can be the center of attention even in demanding projects, whether in film, advertising, games or electronic music. Thanks to it being simple to use, even beginners can create professional arrangements. Professional composers will also get their money's worth thanks to the customization options and details such as the MIDI export function.

More Info

Features

- Comprehensive scoring tool
- Over 160 instruments
- 130 animated, customizable story presets
- Ensemble NKI for complex accompaniments
- Lead NKI for melodies
- 20 GB of samples
- Format: Kontakt Player or Kontakt from 7.7.1
- Windows and macOS

Facts

Developer: Best Service
Web: bestservice.com
Distribution: Download
Price: 399 Euro

- ▲ Wide range of instruments
- ▲ Simple creation of dynamic arrangements
- ▲ Wide range of possible combinations
- ▲ Powerful composition tools
- ▲ Inspiring story presets
- ▲ Intuitive user interface
- ▲ MIDI export
- ▼ Limited selection of synth sounds

Sound:
Operation:
Price/Perf:
Total:

Alternatives

Best Service The Orchestra Complete 3
479 Euro
bestservice.com

Audio Imperia Nucleus
$449 US Dollars
audioimperia.com

Heavyocity Symphonic Destruction
$449 US Dollars
heavyocity.com

Test: Newfangled Recirculate

There are already plenty of delay effects on the market, whether it's as emulations of analog and digital hardware or with a unique concept. Recirculate falls into the latter category. Read on to find out why this new plug-in from Newfangled Audio is justified, despite the already saturated market. by Jan Wilking

Features

- Delay effect
- Feedback can be adjusted independently
- Standard, Pitch Warp, Ping Pong
- Granular modes
- Variable filter
- Transient processing
- Compressor, ducker
- Drive, chorus, reverb
- VST, VST3, AU, AAX
- Windows and macOS: 64 Bit

Facts

Developer:
Newfangled Audio
Web:
newfangledaudio.com
Distribution: Website
Price: 99 Euro

- ▲ Very good sound quality
- ▲ Sophisticated GUI
- ▲ Intuitive operation
- ▲ Customizable repetitions
- ▲ Dynamic processing
- ▲ Additional room effects

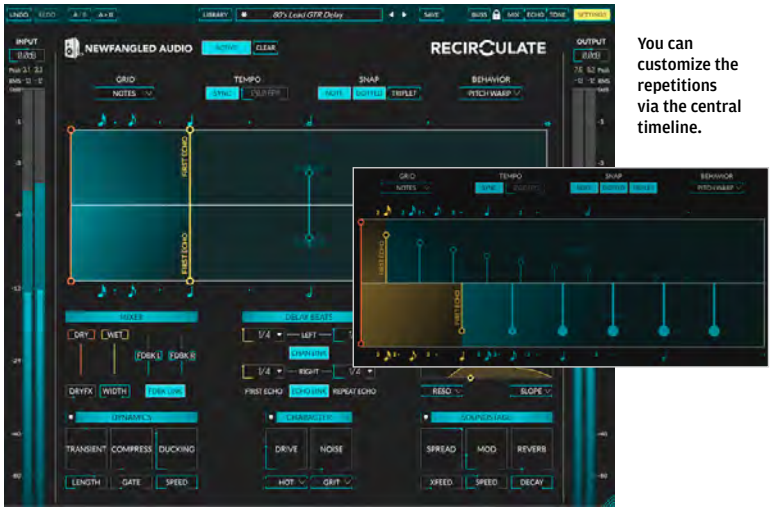
Sound:
Operation:
Price/Perf:
Total:

Alternatives

U-he Colour Copy
69 Euro
u-he.com

UnfilteredAudio Sandman Pro
46 Euro
unfilteredaudio.com

Native Instruments Replika XT
69 Euro
native-instruments.com



You can customize the repetitions via the central timeline.

As with their previous products, Newfangled Audio uses tried and tested techniques for Recirculate, but packs them into a unique concept. This can already be seen in the user interface, the style of which is also recognizable from the company's other products. The photorealistic display of hardware operating elements is completely dispensed with and the advantages of digital technology are fully utilized.

Intuitive operation

At the center is a large timeline that can be used to graphically adjust the basic settings of the delay effect. The time and volume of the first delayed signal can be set together via a bar, for the left and right channels together or separately. The bar can snap into place and be synchronized with the tempo at the appropriate points (for example: 16th notes, dotted 8th notes, and so on). Simple delays can be created quickly and intuitively. But the graphical representation also allows more complex interventions, as you can customize the repetitions after the first delay, such as different time intervals or different volumes. The whole thing can be set separately for the left and right channels. In combination with the different delay variations such as pitch warp, ping pong and granular, this makes it possible to create all kinds of unique effects that go far beyond the possibilities of classic delays, but can still be adjusted intuitively and easily.

Extensive post-processing

Many delay effects have a filter to thin out the repetitions in the bass or treble range. Recirculate not only offers a simple high-pass/lowpass combination, but also many different filter types that can be graphically adjusted and even morphed.

And the dynamics section also has it all. The ducking effect, which can be adjusted in speed and intensity, suppresses the delay signal depending on the volume of the incoming audio signal. This means that the delay can only be heard during pauses in vocals without washing out the mix. This is also helpful for complex rhythmic delays on drums and percussion in order to prevent overlaps. You can also compress the effect and shorten it with an adjustable gate to make it more compact. Even the transients can be emphasized or removed to make the delay softer or snappier.

More effects

In principle, Newfangled Audio has given its delay a complete channel strip including insert and send effects. This is because you can also add adjustable distortion and different levels of noise to the delayed signal using drive and noise. The depth and width of the effects can also be adjusted. Very good-sounding effects such as classic reverb and chorus are available for this, while spread can be used to widen the sound. If you want a more experimental sound, there is an atmospheric granular effect called Spray.

The interface is so intuitive and clearly laid out that you can easily create your own signature effect from the default preset. And the sound quality is beyond reproach.

Verdict

Recirculate sounds great and is versatile enough to cover all kinds of delays. Transparent and unadulterated or warm and round analog or dirty distorted or weird digital, this plug-in masters all common echo effects just as convincingly as rhythmic escapades through to pure drone and ambient sounds. Despite the complex possibilities, the plug-in is intuitive to use, thanks to the sophisticated graphical interface. The diverse options are musically sensible and allow for simple delays, as well as experimental, wacky feedback effects and everything in between. Even if you already own a lot of other delay effects, Recirculate is worth a look.

More info

Test: Silk Vocal & Space Rider

Silk Vocal and Space Rider are two new effects from Waves that, in combination, are perfect for fast and effective vocal processing. Thanks to smart and dynamic technology, the plug-ins do a lot of the work for you. Let's take a look at both of these plug-ins. by Jan Wilking

Silk Vocal specializes in processing vocals, but can theoretically also be used for other audio signals. Space Rider is a universally applicable multi-effect, whereby the combination of Chorus, Delay and Reverb corresponds to the classic effect chain for vocals.

Smart vocal effect

Silk Vocal belongs to the relatively new genre of „smart" effects. The plug-in splits the audio signal into 2,000 frequency bands, analyses them and detects unwanted resonances - optimized for either male or female vocals. You decide on the extent of the correction of recognized acoustic problems. With a conventional equalizer, you have to do this work laboriously by hand and by feel and, above all, by ear, which often leads to unusable results if you are tired after a long recording or mixing session and/or the listening situation is not optimal.

Silk Vocal impressed us. After processing, the vocal tracks sounded more transparent and assertive without losing their warmth. Muffled bass range and overemphasized mids were defused, as were overly sharp highs. You can adjust the processing of the frequency bands individually using the three controls Low, Mid and High; and a single fader takes care of the dynamics. Silk Vocal offers additional settings, but in the test we were almost always able to achieve suitable results with the macro controls alone.

Space Rider

Space Rider can be used like a multi-effect. You can use the controller to continuously adjust the extent to which the Chorus should be sent to the Delay and the Delay to the Reverb. Chorus offers two different variants, as well as adjustable Intensity and Width. Delay is more extensively customizable: in addition to synchronizable Delay Time and Feedback, you can also adjust Modulation and Stereo Offset so that the whole thing doesn't seem too static. There are also highpass and lowpass filters and a ping-pong option. The Reverb offers the Space and Plate algorithms, each with adjustable Decay Time, Delay, Attenuation and Width. The Reverb also has a dual filter for adjusting the frequency response.

A live version with very low latency is also available for use directly during recording.

Effect morphing

In terms of sound, Space Rider plays in the upper mid-range, but is quite unspectacular as a static effect. The special thing about Space Rider is the option to react dynamically to the incoming audio signal without complicated routing or complex automation in the DAW. Simply click on the Alpha Symbol and adjust the parameters of the three effects and the mix control as required. Then, click on the Beta Symbol and change the effect settings; both subtle deviations and extreme changes are possible. You can crossfade manually between the two settings using the Rider Crossfader to create interesting multi-morph effects without much effort.

It gets even more exciting when you activate AUTO. This is because the Rider then reacts dynamically to the incoming audio signal, whereby Sensitivity, Attack and Release can be adjusted. With loud signals, the Rider regulates up to the Beta setting. If it gets quieter, it fades over to the Alpha setting. A simple application would be a ducking effect in which the voice is permanently provided with Chorus and a little Reverb, and the Delay is only faded in during the signal pauses so that the vocals aren't washed out. Conversely, Space Rider can also add huge, striking Reverb to vocals, which ends abruptly at the end of a sung or rapped word. Its intuitive operation invites you to experiment.

Verdict

Silk Vocal and Space Rider are two successful new plug-ins from Waves which, when combined, are perfect for fast, effective and intuitive vocal processing. Silk Vocal makes the vocals more assertive, easier to mix and brings them to the forefront when required. Space Rider provides the right effects and is particularly impressive with its ability to morph dynamically between different settings and combinations. In view of the prices of around 30 Euro, we can recommend both plug-ins without reservation.

More Info

Silk Vocal

- Smarter EQ and dynamics processor
- Optimized for vocals
- Gain compensation
- Usable in real-time

Space Rider

- Multi-effect
- Chorus, delay, reverb
- Morphing per fader
- Dynamic modulation
- VST2/VST3/AU/AAX
- Windows and macOS: 64 Bit

Facts

Developer: Waves
Web: waves.com
Distribution: Website/Download
Price: 29 Euro / 35 Euro

- ▲ Smart frequency correction
- ▲ Dynamic effects
- ▲ Unique concept
- ▲ Simple operation
- ▲ Favorable price

Sound:
Operation:
Price/Perf:
Total:

Alternatives

iZotope Nectar
29 Euro
www.izotope.com

Focusrite FAST
From $89 US Dollars
www.focusrite.com

Baby Audio SmoothOP/SpacedOut
$79 US Dollars
www.babyaud.io

Test: Cableguys ReverbShaper

Cableguys has added the new ReverbShaper module to its ShaperBox host. Thanks to LFO control, this reverb can now help signals to attract more attention in a lively way. by Georg Berger

Features

- Integrated convolution reverb
- Multiband signal processing
- Separate impulse responses per band
- Reverb send and output controllable via LFO
- Integrated ducking function
- Several LFO triggers
- Windows, macOS
- VST2, VST3, AU, AAX
- Windows and macOS: 64 Bit

Facts

Developer: Cableguys
Web: cableguys.com
Distribution: Download
Price: 39 Euro

- ▲ Many impulse responses
- ▲ Import of impulse responses
- ▲ Separate reverb chambers in bands
- ▲ Opulent curves
- ▲ Precise detection of audio triggers
- ▲ Partial effect of the ShaperBox host

Features:
Operation:
Price/Perf:
Total:

Alternatives

Sugarbytes Effectrix 2
99 Euro
sugar-bytes.de

Rob Papen Punch 2
149 Euro
www.robpapen.com

Softube Heartbeat
139 Euro
www.softube.com

With the ShaperBox, Cableguys has been providing dancefloor artists and others with smart tools for spicing up static beats and monotonous bass lines for years. A tenth effect has recently been added to the ShaperBox family, the ReverbShaper, which costs around 40 Euro and can be loaded and linked modularly. What all effects have in common is that selected parameters can be animated via opulently adjustable LFO curves. As expected, the Cutoff and Resonance can be set to LFO movement in the FilterShaper effect or the degree of distortion in the DriveShaper effect. The new ReverbShaper, on the other hand, allows you to animate the send level, that is, how strongly the useful signal runs into the plug-in, as well as the reverb volume independently of the separately adjustable Dry/Wet component.

Critics will now argue whether such an effect is necessary at all, as something like this can also be realized with the on-board tools of a DAW. The Solomonic answer is yes and no. Certainly, something comparable can be achieved using mixer automation or by linking an external LFO with the desired effect plus MIDI Learn/Routing. However, this goes hand-in-hand with a high adjustment effort. The Cableguys' shaper effects, on the other hand, are much easier to use and have additional features that are not so easy to replicate, as we'll see. Game, set and match for the Cableguys..

Part of the ShaperBox family

At the heart of the effect is a Convolution Reverb, which is equipped with 127 impulse responses. In addition to the usual suspects, there are also rather some exotic examples with descriptive names such as „Ayayay", „Robot says Yo", „Metal Forever" and „Evil Laughter". Importing your own impulse responses (wav, aiff) is, of course, also possible. The Reverb can be adjusted with the usual parameters such as Predelay and Decay. Size extends or shortens the length and sound of the impulse response through resampling and Width sets the stereo width of the Reverb signal. The „Gated" button transforms the Reverb into a gated reverb. We will come to the Clear Tails function in a moment. To the right of the Reverb Parameter section is a multiband dialog that allows you to split the incoming signal into three freely definable frequency bands. The highlight: A separate impulse response with individual settings can be used for each frequency band. And you get three guesses what else: As a result, individual LFO curves for Send and Volume can, of course, also be created for each band. At this point if not before, it is very difficult to create something like this with DAW on-board tools. Apart from that, such a feature is not commonplace and further elevates this plug-in.

ReverbShaper is the tenth partial effect included in the ShaperBox plug-in. All partial effects can be linked in series in the plug-in.

Separate Reverb Chambers in Multiband Mode

The main actors of the effect, however, are the two LFOs, whose sequences can be individually created in the central waveform editor of the GUI. Prefabricated basic shapes and lush curves are available at the bottom of the plug-in. Custom creations can be saved in nine different slots. These are also available to all other shaper effects. Jagged-edged gradients and curved gradients are created using three curve drawing tools. If you like, you can force the curves and their nodes into a bar grid or draw and move them freely. Curves can be looped and reversed horizontally and vertically, they can be doubled and their phase can be shifted to the left or right in quarter note increments. A random function can also be used to generate completely surprising curves. The complexity of the result is based on the initial curve. So, if you've only drawn in two individual points, you'll get random variants along the lines of the „two points". A Smooth function ensures that hard, angular curves are flattened so that rectangular curves can be quickly transformed into sinusoidal curves, if required. At this point, we would also like to reveal the secret of the „Clear Tails" function: If it is active and a node within the LFO curve for the Reverb Volume is set to zero, the reverb tail is abruptly deleted. The purpose of this is to avoid sound clutter, for example, when the still fading reverb tail interferes with an incoming guitar line. This has a similar effect to a gated reverb, only now using a cleverly created LFO curve.

As if that wasn't enough, you can also set how fast the curve should run. When it comes to synchronization, there are three options for triggering the curves: To the tempo of the DAW, by triggering via MIDI, or using the transients of an external audio signal. For the latter, there is a separate sub-dialog that offers detailed setting options for trimming the transients so that they trigger the LFOs in a targeted manner. As the icing on the cake, a MIDI note can even be generated, sent and recorded from it. The MIDI note can then be used for other effects in the ShaperBox or similar host.

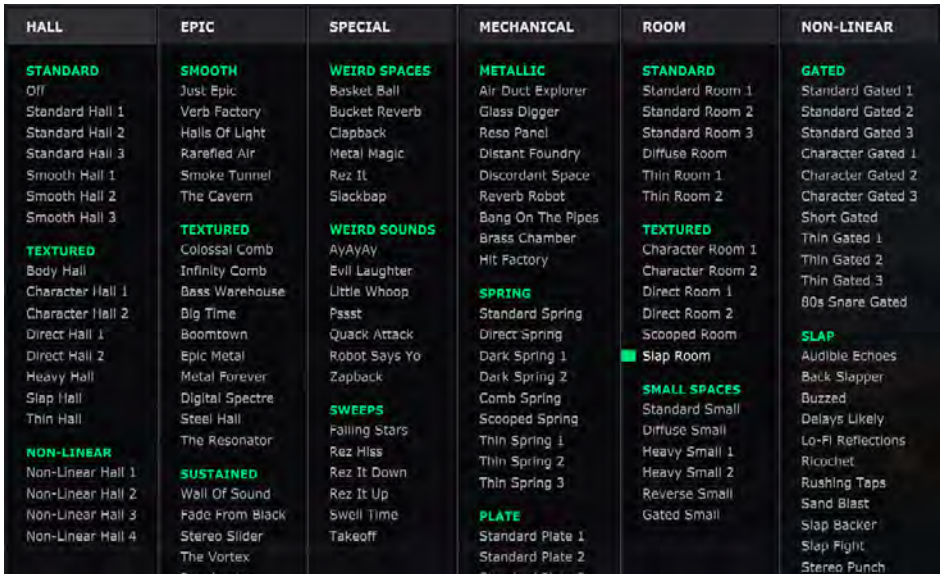
Ducking via Envelope Follower

This is not quite the end of the ReverbShaper's range of features. An Envelope Follower can be activated by pressing the On/Off icon below the „Envelope" entry. It is used to create a ducking effect. In other words, as long as an audio signal is present, the volume of the reverb is suppressed. If there is a pause, the reverb fades in more or less quickly, only to be dampened again as soon as a signal is present again. The Amount fader can be used to adjust the strength of the ducking effect. Click on the two small arrows in the Envelope area to open a dialog with additional setting options. The ducking effect can also be reversed there by selecting the „Follow" option. Now the reverb can always be heard with the signal and not during pauses, whereby the volume of the reverb changes in line with the envelope curve. In this advanced section, in addition to the Amount control, there are also a Threshold, an Attack, Hold and Release parameters for fine adjustments. Incidentally, the Envelope Follower can be set individually in each of the bands in Multiband Mode or only in a specific, freely definable frequency range. All in all, the ReverbShaper offers an opulent range of features with extensive settings options, some of which - see multiband processing - are second to none.

Rhythmic, pulsating reverb tails

In the listening and practical tests, we initially approached the ReverbShaper by calling up the presets supplied. We first have to download these presets after the initial installation of the current version. Once this was done, we were initially rather disappointed. For the most part, there are only presets that provide for the use of several partial effects at once. As if that wasn't enough, the few solo ReverbShaper presets don't show much of the possibilities on offer. In the waveform dialog, for example, we usually see a more or less high horizontal line. The fact that there are mostly only multi-effect presets may still be okay. After all,

The central waveform editor can be used to create opulent LFO curves that affect the send level and the output volume of the reverb. The Envelope section on the right-hand side also implements a ducking reverb.



The integrated Convolution Reverb comes out of the box with 127 impulse responses, some of which are very unusual.

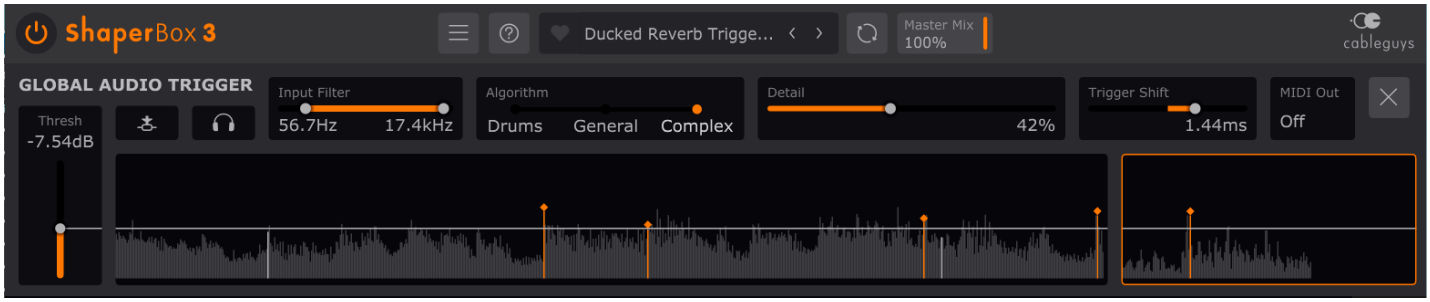
» At the heart of the effect is a convolution reverb equipped with 127 impulse responses. «

the manufacturer also wants to sell other partial effects. But for the release of a new module, we would have liked more presets with spectacular sound sequences. We are reconciled by a series of YouTube videos in which the power of the ReverbShaper is impressively demonstrated. But before we get to that, let's first listen to the sound of the impulse responses supplied. If you don't yet own a convolution reverb, ReverbShaper is a very good-sounding convolution reverb that scores points above all with its unusual impulse responses and textures. Thanks to the manageable number of parameters, the desired sound can be achieved quickly. By cleverly using the Multiband feature, we can apply the reverb to specific frequency ranges. In this way, we exclude the bass frequencies from the reverb processing in the test and save ourselves from a muffled reverb swamp that robs us of energy in the mix. With the Ducking feature, which is apparently becoming more and more common in the standard arsenal of reverb processors, we can control the fading in and out of the reverb tail with high precision, thanks to the parameters provided; something we had not yet encountered in this form. Our first attempts with the LFO control resulted in the creation of swells, which, depending on the impulse response used, were sometimes rather fine and subtle, at other times brutal and literally expansive. We felt our way forward and created a series of spikes in the editor, which were fitted into the grid and, ultimately, lead to a rhythmic pulsation of the reverb tail. Next, we created a curve that consists of a series of more or less narrow rectangles and causes the send fader to supply only certain events with reverb in a targeted manner. Finally, we underlayed a short audio impulse with the extremely powerful „Wall of Sound" reverb, which continued to blare for several seconds after the end of the impulse. Now let's try out one of the rhythmic curves supplied from the factory and listen to this: the hissing takes on the consecration of a percussion instrument and sets itself off with groovy, swinging accents. In this way, a rather banal impulsive event can be dramatically enhanced with reverb. That's not bad at all; however, our experiments with different impulse responses in individual bands, partly with and partly without the ducking feature, were not very successful in the test. It's all too easy to sound queasy and not very transparent. Admittedly, a lot of routine and trial and error is still required to achieve usable results, but the potential is there. And, as is so often the case, the maxim applies here too: less is more.

VERDICT

With ReverbShaper, Cableguys expands its ShaperBox with a very good-sounding Convolution Reverb that is equipped with some unusual-sounding impulse responses. With features such as the currently popular ducking reverb and the core competence - controlling important parameters via LFO curves - ReverbShaper clearly demonstrates how rhythmic swell and gate effects can also be created with reverb tails. These can sometimes sound subtle, sometimes superficial and offer a welcome alternative to the usual „filter-on" and „filter-off".

More Info



The Global Audio Trigger section offers extensive settings options for processing audio signals that are used to trigger the LFO curves.

Zampler plug-in, soundset and audio demo: Download see page 9

Zampler & MPC Expansion: LIQUID D&B

91 Patches for spherical beats

This month, it's all about fluid pads, rumbling bass, soulful instant chords and a relaxed feeling - in short: Liquid Drum & Bass. The style, which emerged in the 90s, still plays an enormously important role today and even reaches public radio stations thanks to international hit acts such as Kenya Grace and Wilkinson. So grab the 91 patches from the magazine downloads and let's go! by Marco Scherer

RELAXED, BUT ALWAYS MOVING

It feels like Liquid Drum & Bass has been around forever - and the genre is perfect for listening, dancing and floating at the same time. Our latest pack, compatible with Zampler and your MPC, features 91 fluid Pads, growling basses, soulful chords and crystal-clear bells that create the relaxed feel you want in an instant. If you like labels like Hospital Records, Fokuz, Shogun and Liquicity or artists like High Contrast, LTJ Bukem and Etherwood, then this pack is for you! **www.zamplersounds.com**

Facts

LIQUID D&B for Zampler:

- 2.6 GB soundbank for spherical D&B
- 32 pads
- 30 basses
- 29 keys, leads, synths & arps
- Compatible with Zampler, UVI Falcon, Native Instruments Kontakt, Steinberg HALion and all samplers that can load SFZ files.

LIQUID D&B for Akai MPCs:

- 1.24 GB samples (optimized for MPCs)
- 32 pads
- 30 basses
- 29 keys, leads, synths & arps
- Compatible with Akai MPC One, X, Live, Live mkII, Force, Touch, Software, Beats and Renaissance

Test: KeyLab Essential 88 mk3

The Essential version of the KeyLab 88 is more compact and lighter than the large KeyLab 88 MkII or other master keyboards with 88 keys. This means it can easily be transported to a gig by one person or placed in a desktop studio.

by Jan Wilking

Features

- USB/MIDI master keyboard
- 88 Semi-weighted keys
- Velocity response
- 8 pads with RGB LEDs
- 9 controls, 9 faders
- 2.5 inch display
- Chord & Scale function
- USB-powered
- MIDI output
- Dimensions 1258 x 88 x 255mm
- Inkl. Analog Lab V

Facts

Manufacturer: Arturia
Web: arturia.com
Distribution: Tomeso
Price: 399 Euro

- ▲ Relatively light and compact
- ▲ Multicolored drum pads
- ▲ Arpeggiator
- ▲ Split function
- ▲ Analog Lab integration
- ▲ DAW control
- ▲ Includes Analog Lab V
- ▲ MIDI output
- ▼ Keyboard without aftertouch

Workmanship:
Operation:
Price/Perf:
Total:

Alternatives

Novation Launchkey 88
379 Euro
novationmusic.com

Nektar Impact LX88+
279 Euro
nektartech.com

M-Audio Keystation 88
219 Euro
m-audio.com

The Arturia KeyLab Essential 88 is available in black and white.

The differences to the larger, heavier and significantly more expensive KeyLab MkII lie primarily in the quality of the hardware. The KeyLab Essential does without the robust metal housing featuring wooden sides and the weighted keyboard with hammer action and aftertouch. Thanks to sturdy plastic, KeyLab Essential 88 is much lighter and more compact, yet still feels robust.

The cheaper price is also noticeable in the plastic faders and knobs, apart from the stylish large knob below the display. However, they implement the movements cleanly and sit quite firmly, with a certain resistance and aren't too wobbly. The pads have a good feel and can be played with nuance. In contrast to the keyboard, the pads react to corresponding pressure, individually for each pad. This is interesting for Arturia instruments such as the CS-80V, as well as for the numerous new MPE instruments in Ableton Live.

Power is supplied via USB; a power bank or USB power supply unit can be used for operation without a computer.

Keyboard & DAW controller

You can assign any MIDI commands to all knobs, faders, buttons and pads and save them as presets that can be called up directly from the keyboard. KeyLab Essential also offers a split function with separate editing of the upper and lower sections of the keyboard. Thanks to the Chord function, you can play chords with just one key, and the Scale function allows you to select a specific scale to prevent off-key notes. The built-in arpeggiator offers different playback directions and octave ranges to choose from. Tempo, Divider, Note Length and Swing are also customizable.

All functions can be adjusted directly on the keyboard. A long press on the Arp or Split button, for example, opens the corresponding menu; the various parameters are shown on the large display and can be scrolled through and changed using the large rotary control with click function. Four buttons below the display make navigation easier.

KeyLab Essential can be used as a DAW controller. Clip-based DAWs such as Ableton Live or Bitwig, in particular, benefit from the eight multi-colored pads. These can be used to record, start and stop clips, with the pads adopting the colors of the clips. Use the large controller knob to scroll through the scenes, which are even displayed with names, and you can also start them directly. Transport buttons, Quantize, Tap Tempo, Undo/Redo and other helpful functions can be controlled via the buttons. And you can control the mixer or the device parameters with the knobs and faders, with both track and parameter names shown on the display.

Analog Lab V

With KeyLab Essential 88, you can also extensively control the in-house Analog Lab V software. Using the large controller knob and the four buttons, you can quickly select categories and tap through the appropriate sounds, which are displayed with names and can also be marked as favorites directly, if you like them. The knobs and faders are automatically assigned to the respective macro controls in Analog Lab V. There are no value jumps for the endless controls anyway; the current values for the faders can be retrieved or scaled when changing sounds.

Verdict

KeyLab Essential 88 is a good alternative if you need a master keyboard with 88 keys, but are put off by the weight, size and price of keyboards with hammer action. KeyLab Essential 88 can be transported and set up alone to the gig or rehearsal room without assistance and also fits into smaller desktop studios.

The keyboard is touch-sensitive, but only semi-weighted and rattles a little. The keyboard is, therefore, not suitable for demanding pianists, but can be used more flexibly in the desktop studio. The proven integration into the included AnalogLab software is also available, as is comprehensive DAW control, making the KeyLab Essential 88 well suited as a control center in the project studio.

More Info

Black Lion Audio
Revolution EXP

You can never have enough analog inputs and outputs in the studio, especially if you work a lot with external equipment. A drum computer with individual outputs, a stereo synthesizer and an analog effects unit and even the 8 inputs of larger audio interfaces are not always enough. And sending the individual DAW tracks to an external mixer or summing unit in order to fuse them together in analog style quickly fails due to the lack of outputs. Many audio interfaces do offer digital connections for expansion. However, most of these extensions are designed for the connection of many microphones and, therefore, have built-in preamps for each additional channel, which you don't need in an electronic home studio, but still have to pay for.

This is where Evolution EXP comes into play. The extension, installed in a 19-inch housing at one height unit, only offers line inputs and outputs in classic jack format; and there are 8 of each. Evolution EXP is connected via the common ADAT format, which is integrated in many audio interfaces. The USB-C interface, on the other hand, is only used for firmware updates. Each channel has an 8-digit LED meter with overload indicator. If required, each input channel can be individually attenuated by 10 dB using a button so that louder signals can also be recorded without distortion. The interface supports sample rates of up to 192 kHz, and the sound quality completely impressed us in the practical test: transparent, dynamic and without background noise.

A special feature of the Revolution EXP is the MMC clocking, so that the ADAT extension can serve as a clock for the entire studio, if desired. Alternatively, the device can also synchronize itself via the two ADAT ports on the rear or via the BNC word clock connection.

Verdict

You can also use many inputs and outputs in the desktop studio to flexibly integrate hardware sound generators, connect multi-channel/surround monitor sets or mix/sum analog. Revolution EXP offers 8 inputs and 8 outputs specifically for line signals so that, unlike many other ADAT expansions, you don't have to pay for unnecessary microphone preamps and get the best possible sound quality. As the icing on the cake, Revolution can also serve as a solid clock for your studio.

Manufacturer: Black Lion Audio
Web: blacklionaudio.de
Distribution: Audiowerk
Price: 949 Euro

Rating:

REVOLUTION
6X6

BLACK LION AUDIO

SOUND
BETTER
BETTER
SOUND

The portable High End Interface
6-channel standalone USB audio interface with Word Clock and OTG feature.

Vertrieb: AUDIOWERK www.audiowerk.eu info@audiowerk.eu
https://www.blacklionaudio.de/revolution-6x6-standalone-interface/

Test: SOMA Pulsar-23

Pulsar-23 is an analog drum synthesizer with four tracks for kick, snare, hi-hat/cymbal and bass/percussion. The semi-modular device follows the concept of the organismic synthesizer - this means that all 23 modules including chaos generator, clock and LFO can be interconnected. by Jan Wilking

Features

- Drum synthesizer
- Analog sound generation
- Semi-modular
- Kick, snare, bass/perc, hi-hat/cymbal
- 4 individual loop recorders
- DSP effect
- Analog distortion
- MIDI input (DIN)

Facts

Manufacturer: SOMA
Web: somasynths.com
Distribution: Specialists
Price: 2.058 Euro

- ▲ Innovative concept
- ▲ Fat analog sound
- ▲ Modular design
- ▲ 119 patch pins
- ▲ Looper recorder
- ▲ Very good effects
- ▲ Flexible MIDI control
- ▲ Freely assignable outputs

Sound:
Processing:
Price/perf.:
Total:

Alternativen

Moog DFAM
699 Euro
moogmusic.com

Vermona DRM1
799 Euro
vermona.de

Erica Synths Perkons/ Techno System
1.965 Euro
ericasynths.lv

The modular concept of the drum synthesizer makes no distinction between control voltage and audio signal. You can use the bass drum as an LFO or, conversely, route the LFO as a sounding oscillator to the audio output, or use the clock as a short percussive sound to emphasize the transients. Pulsar-23 therefore not only masters classic analog sounds, but also unconventional sounds in the form of glitches, drones and clicks. Four loopers with a very unique concept, together with the built-in effects such as distortion, delay and reverb, make Pulsar-23 an experimental groovebox for sound artists.

Crocodile clips instead of plugs

What is striking at first glance are the many metal rods that protrude from the housing. They represent the patch points, of which there are no fewer than 119. Soma has chosen these pins over the usual patch sockets mainly for reasons of space and cost, but they also offer a number of advantages over the conventional solution. They are robust and virtually indestructible, whereas the usual 3.5mm sockets can easily give up the ghost or contact if they are plugged in and unplugged many times and carelessly. In addition, up to four crocodile clips can easily be attached to one pin in order to route a modulation source to several destinations or to have a parameter such as the filter frequency modulated by several sources. With a classic modular system, multipliers would have to be planned for this.

Open for experiments

Thanks to the clips, the supplied cables can also be easily plugged into each other and thus extended, and the simple technology allows them to make contact with almost any other electrical equipment without any detours. And during a live performance, you or your body can also be the cable by simply touching two pins to make the connection. The whole thing is wired in such a way that nothing can break, no matter what you connect to it - a dream for experiments! And SOMA has also made provisions for connecting to a classic modular system, as there are also eight freely switchable patch sockets for converting pins to the 3.5 mm Euro rack format.

Not a beginner‘s drum synth

A quick note before we get into the details: In our opinion, Pulsar-23 is not a drum synthesizer for beginners. As with a modular system or a semi-modular synthesizer like the ARP-2600, there are no presets that can be used as a starting point. And even we, with many years of experience, needed a few minutes after unpacking the Pulsar-23 to elicit a usable sound at all. It is commendable that SOMA provides detailed instructions in all common languages and also offers a quick start and even a well thought-out interactive manual as well as many video tutorials. And since you can‘t break anything when patching randomly, you can just plug and play and see what comes out.

Bassdrum

Channel 1 is primarily designed for creating kicks. A triangle wave can be tuned within a wide range and modulated in pitch, a pitch envelope provides the necessary boom and attack and a very good-sounding drive distorts the sound if required by waveshaping from triangle to sine to square. A crunchy 909 kick or a wicked industrial monster bass drum, everything is set up in no time at all, bangs properly and sounds fat and analog. For those who like it even more experimental, WTF? and OMG! are two appropriately titled pins for circuit bending of waveform and pitch modulation, making weird things and chip sounds possible.

Bass synthesizer

The bass channel is very flexible. It is a bass synthesizer that can also be played chromatically over the entire keyboard via MIDI. It also processes velocity for dynamic playing and MIDI-CC05 for portamento. It can also be controlled via CV or used as tonal percussion (e.g. synth toms).

The basis here is a DCO with morphable waveform and waveshaper, all of which can of course be modulated. The Pulsar also produces a very fat and rich bass sound, with plenty of distortion if required, which never sounds unpleasant due to the analog components. A low-pass filter with adjustable resonance can process the raw oscillator sound and also an external audio signal looped in via a patch pin.

Pulsar-23 is available in various color combinations, striking or discreet.

6 individual outputs allow individual post-processing of the sounds.

Snare/clap

Compared to the first two channels, the snare drum is somewhat more harmless and is more of a clap. This is because it only consists of a noise generator and lacks the tunable oscillator that provides the body of the snare in classic drum machines. In keeping with this, the clap parameter splits the attack of the sound into various delayed parts, which is more in keeping with the typical analog clap sound. The noise generator can be continuously adjusted between pink and spectral noise and processed with a bandpass filter with resonance. An audio signal can also be looped into the clap channel, e.g. to process the bass with the bandpass filter.

HiHat/cymbals

The fourth channel is reserved for hi-hats and cymbals, but can also be used for any number of other metallic sounds and, with the right warp factor and slow attack, also for shakers etc. Here, too, the basis is a noise generator whose spectrum can be changed with a waveshaper. The hi-hat channel offers a high-pass filter with resonance, which can also be used externally - this completes the filter trio with LP, BP and HP in the Pulsar.

All four tracks also offer a volume control, adjustable effect send and an attack-release envelope.

Looper recorder

Below this is the looper recorder section (LR), with a general section and an individual recorder for each track. Four banks with four tracks each are available, whereby each track can have a different rhythm, length and speed. However, you cannot save permanently; the recordings are lost when you switch off.

LR is therefore purely a performance tool, and it does this job extremely well. Switch to Record, add notes with the Add touch button like on a tape, delete parts with the DEL button if necessary. There is a simple quantization, deeper post-processing is not possible. However, in combination with the flexible internal clock, the looper runs with extremely stable and clean timing, which is almost impossible to achieve via MIDI or in the DAW.

Good DSP effects

We also really liked the Pulsar-23's internal DSP effects. There is adjustable distortion on the master channel, which ranges from slight saturation to powerful distortion and sounds really rich and good in all settings. There are also two effects channels with delay and reverb, which can be fed via the FX controls on the tracks. The effects can be used flexibly, even in stereo, and modulated in various parameters. This also allows for wacky effects, e.g. changing the clock of the DSP processor via an envelope or the LFO module located directly underneath.

Additional modules

Pulsar-23 offers numerous other useful modules such as Attenuator, Inverter, MIDI-to-CV or Pulse Converter and Divider, which we are unable to examine in detail due to the limited length of the test. Particularly worth mentioning is the SHAOS generator, a synchronizable random generator that can generate repetitive patterns as well as classic S/H effects.

Six individual outputs

Finally, let's take a look at the back. Here you will find the connection for the external power supply along with the power switch, MIDI input (DIN) and eight jack outputs for audio signals: master audio output, headphone output and six individual outputs. The individual outputs can be freely assigned via pins on the top. You can therefore assign the four instruments to one output each and process them individually with external effects, and route the effects in stereo to the remaining two outputs. However, you can also choose other routings, e.g. route the kick to two outputs and process them in parallel with different effects or create special stereo or spatial sound dimensions with the help of a mixing console.

More info

VERDICT

Pulsar-23 is an extraordinary drum synthesizer with a very unique concept. It can easily produce the classic drum sounds plus bassline with a fat and rich analog sound and sounds very powerful, dynamic and aggressive - perfect for harder music styles. With 23 modules and over 100 patch points, it also invites you to experiment and can create weird, unusual and never-before-heard sounds. Thanks to its extensive connectivity, Pulsar-23 can also be extensively integrated into existing systems, either analog or digital via MIDI. The intuitive looper recorder and the good internal effects also allow you to create unique grooves with the Pulsar-23 alone. A great instrument that will still surprise you in a few years' time! However, Pulsar-23 is not cheap and requires a certain amount of experience and experimentation to really make the most of its possibilities.

Test: Korg KAOSS Replay

KAOSS Replay is a stand-alone performance tool that revives the concept of the popular KAOSS effects devices. Korg wants to present the ideal all-in-one solution for musicians, live artists and producers. In addition to its unique KAOSS pad with the corresponding effects, Replay also offers sampling and playback as well as various DJ functions. by Jan Wilking

Features

Effect device/sampler
Touch display
128 KAOSS effects
16 sample pads
128 samples per project
USB audio interface
Microphone input
Line/phono input
MIDI input and output

Facts

Manufacturer: KORG
Web: korg.de
Distribution: Korg & More
Price: 1.099 Euro

- ▲ Creative touch effects
- ▲ stereo sampler
- ▲ Streaming from SD card
- ▲ Robust workmanship
- ▲ USB audio interface
- ▼ No sequencer
- ▼ Limited sample editing
- ▼ timing problems
- ▼ RCA connections only
- ▼ high price

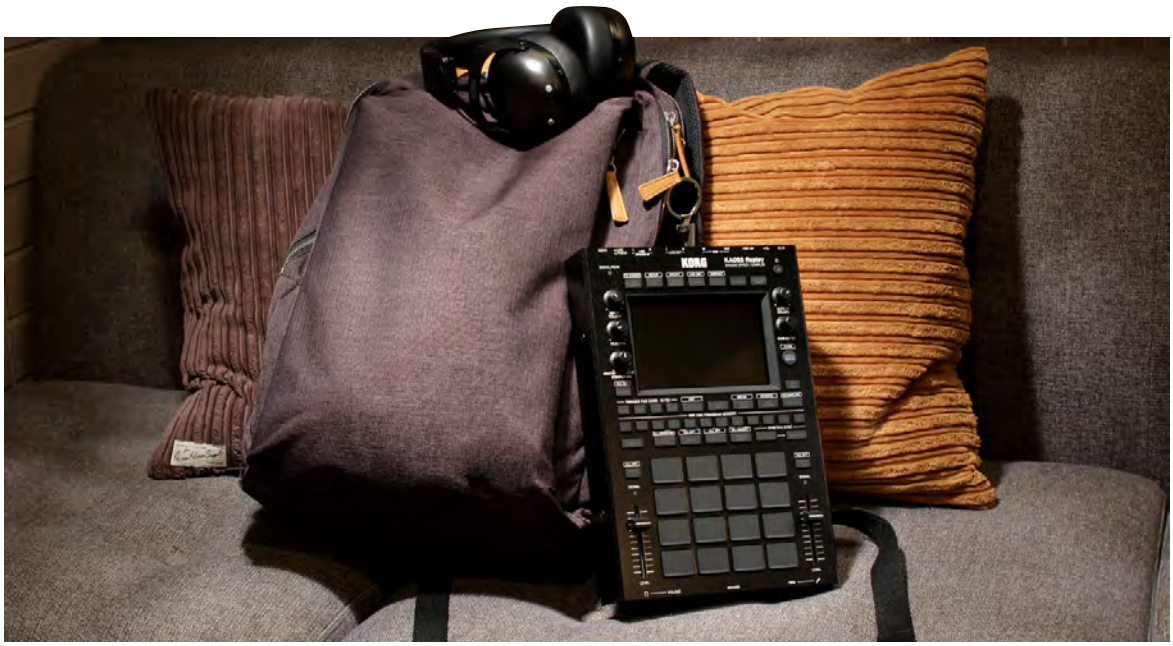
Sound:
Processing:
Price/perf.:
Total:

Alternatives

Akai MPC One/Live
789 Euro
akaipro.com

Pioneer DJ RMX-1000
from 749 Euro
pioneerdj.com

Roland SP-404 mk2
444 Euro
roland.com



Korg seems to be returning to its older, but proven concepts. In addition to the new editions of the Micro-Korg and the KingKorg, the KAOSS pad also receives new honors. The Japanese introduced this innovative effects device, in which several parameters can be controlled simultaneously using an X/Y touchpad with your fingers, in 1999. The last new edition, the KP3+, is now over 10 years old. The KAOSS pads have not only proven themselves on the DJ console, but are also often used by musicians. The Radiohead hit "Everything In Its Right Place" is remembered not only because of the succinct Prophet5 riff, but also because of the vocals, dynamically altered using a KAOSS pad.

No „production center"

At first glance, KAOSS Replay, with its newly added 16 velocity-sensitive sample pads with colored LED lighting, is reminiscent of performance samplers such as Roland SP-404 or Akai MPC. But before false expectations arise here: With KAOSS Replay, as with the KAOSS pads, the focus is clearly on the creation and real-time manipulation of effects with which you can edit what is played internally or what is looped in externally. So KAOSS Replay is not a flexible performance sampler or looper, not a complete groove box and certainly not a sample-based production center. On the other hand, with an Akai MPC, for example, you can also edit samples with effects and manipulate these effects via the touchscreen, in addition to producing complete tracks.

Effects device for DJs

When you look at the back, you can see that Korg had DJs' live performances in mind when developing the KAOSS Replay. The audio inputs and outputs are designed as RCA sockets. This is not necessarily the first choice for a reliable cable connection and the best audio quality, but most DJ equipment is currently equipped with these connections and therefore KAOSS Replay can be integrated into a DJ setup without an adapter. The input can also be used directly for turntables, including an amplifier and ground connection. A 3.5mm aux input for smartphones etc. is also available.

USB for power and audio

The USB connection doesn't necessarily meet the latest studio standards either. There is USB-C for power, but KAOSS Replay runs with the included power supply. Unfortunately, the KAOSS Replay does not have a built-in battery or a battery compartment, but in a short test a powerful power bank worked as a replacement for the power supply. Unfortunately, to connect to your computer or mobile device, you have to make do with the more fragile and unreliable outdated MicroUSB port. Not only MIDI data, but also audio can be transmitted: the multi-channel USB audio interface delivers two inputs and a whopping 34 output channels to the connected com-

puter at 48kHz/16bit. The whole thing works without a driver for Mac, but Korg provides an ASIO driver for Windows. There are also two DIN sockets for MIDI IN/OUT. There is also a jack input for the footswitch.

Headphones, microphone, SD card

On the front there are 6.3mm jack sockets for the headphone output and the input for dynamic microphones, each with its own level control. You can also use the headphones to preview samples and adapt them to the song before the audio signal is sent to the main output. You can continuously adjust the mixing ratio between the monitor and main mix using the controller. The slot for the microSD card is also on the front. An 8 GB card is included, KAOSS Replay officially supports cards with up to 32 GB.

Very robust workmanship

In keeping with the rough stage use, the metal housing is very sturdy and also correspondingly heavy: KAOSS Replay weighs a whopping 2 kilograms despite its compact dimensions of 185 x 284 x 56 mm (slightly smaller than a DIN A4 sheet). Even the pads with a rather hard touch sensitivity appear solid and trigger cleanly. Only the plastic faders and controls seem a bit light and wobbly. They are very flat and therefore harder to grip, but also less at risk of breaking.

OLED touchscreen

Above the sample pads there are a large number of navigation buttons and above them the heart of the KAOSS Replay, the 5-inch OLED touch display for intuitive control of the KAOSS effects. The touchscreen lights up red when your finger touches it and traces the drawn lines. Of course, this is great live because it directly visualizes the effect being heard or its changes. The screen responds excellently and has such a high resolution that it can also be used to display content and navigate menus. We would like Korg to expand this area even further and allow the names of samples etc. to be shown on the display during the performance without having to stop playback and dive into menus.

The same applies to the actually very practical second function as an X/Y pad, which allows sending MIDI controllers. This makes it possible to use the touchscreen as a controller for synthesizers and plug-ins. Unfortunately, this doesn't work in parallel with ongoing performance.

16 sample pads

The 16 rubberized pads are used to trigger samples. The respective coloring indicates what type of sample is stored on the pad. Loops can be up to 16 bars long and can be recognized by their blue color, one-shots such as drums, percussion or short vocals are orange and complete songs are marked pink to match the DFB's new away jersey. We found the HotCue function to be practical, with which up to 12 markers can be set within the songs and accessed directly using the associated 12 buttons. However, this has to be done by ear in the old school way and is not automatically quantized at the beginning of the bar, but can be edited afterwards. To do this, however, the other pads have to be stopped; adjustments during the ongoing performance are not so easy. Alternatively, you can also select your 12 favorite effects directly using the 12 buttons.

The trigger pads can be assigned to groups A or B, the volumes of which can be individually controlled using the two faders to the left and right of them. With a little skill, this also allows interesting crossfades between samples, loops, tracks and external audio material.

The RCA connections are quite practical for DJs, but we would have liked additional jack sockets.

Sampler

But how do you get the right samples onto the pads? To do this, connect an audio source to the analog inputs and record directly. This also works via the USB audio inputs. Or you can import samples via the MicroSD card. This has the advantage that you can prepare the samples beforehand on the computer using an audio editor. If necessary, you can also cut samples directly in the device, but unfortunately only when the performance is stopped. It is also possible to adjust the tempo using time-stretching, although the quality of the algorithm cannot quite keep up with modern DAWs.

No sequencer

We already mentioned it above: KAOSS Replay is an effects device for fed-in audio signals from records, CDs or live performances or for samples triggered by a pad and is not intended for producing your own tracks. Consequently, there is no sequencer of any kind; samples always have to be triggered manually via the pads. This can also be done via MIDI notes, so using a DAW or an external MIDI sequencer can fill this gap - but that's more of a compromise.

Proven KAOSS effects

Since KAOSS Replay defines itself primarily as an effects device, the quality and scope of the effects as well as their operation are particularly important. The previous KAOSS pads were already

The microphone input allows you to edit and record your voice with effects even without additional equipment.

The responsive touchscreen and the specially tailored effects are the highlight of the KAOSS Replay.

convincing here, and there is nothing to complain about with the KAOSS Replay either. Although some effects seem a bit dated at first glance, they still work surprisingly well in combination with the real-time manipulation via touchpad.

The finger touch and the corresponding parameter change can be frozen by clicking on the TouchHold button. The movement of the fingers can also be recorded with Pad Motion and then played back, even backwards.

Microphone input

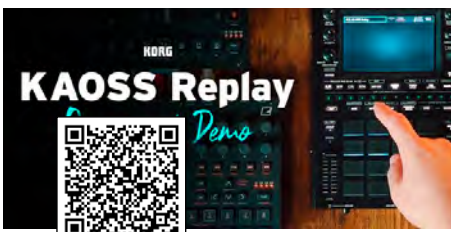
As the processing source, you can choose between audio input (line/phono), microphone (e.g. for vocoder effects) or sampler (also divided into group A/B). The microphone input has its own effects, namely equalizer, reverb and delay. These are very spartan, but at least your voice won't sound completely dry if you put the KAOSS-FX on another source (e.g. song or sample). Unfortunately, like the previous KAOSS pads, KAOSS Replay can only produce one effect at a time; a combination of effects like Roland's SP-404 is not possible.

Convincing as a pure effects device...

And how does KAOSS Replay perform in practice? It works very well as a pure effects device, almost like the old KAOSS pads. Manipulating a line signal, for example from a DJ mixer, with the appropriate effects is simply fun and leads to interesting results. Drops, breaks, etc. can be created intuitively with your fingers on the pad, and KAOSS Replay can be played like an instrument. Since up to 128 stereo audio files can be loaded onto the pads as WAV, you can even save yourself an external player and load your prepared complete tracks into the device.

... as a performance sampler, not so much

But if, in addition to the effects, you want to intervene more deeply in the song structure by mixing several stems together or running loops in parallel, things get more tricky. Manual synchronous startup is difficult and the auto-align function for correction can only be accessed using a shift combination. Resampling the running performance or using external material as a looper didn't go really smoothly either; the loops created were often slightly off and for editing, e.g. changing the starting point, all running loops have to be stopped first. The attempt to integrate a Groovebox tempo-synchronously via MIDI clock worked well after a firmware update – there older Kaoss pads definitely had their problems. At this point, big praise goes to the German Korg sales department for their exemplary support!



More info

VERDICT

Like the well-known KAOSS pads, KAOSS Replay impresses with interesting and unique effects that can be easily manipulated using the large touchscreen. Additional equipment is not absolutely necessary for the live performance, as complete songs can be loaded into the device in the best audio quality, which you can then supplement with a few suitably prepared samples. KAOSS Replay also cuts a fine figure as a supplement to a groove box or a turntable synchronized via AutoBPM and has the advantage of robust packaging and suitable connections compared to software solutions such as iPad apps, NI Traktor etc. And the integrated audio interface, microphone input with vocal effects and easy triggering of samples via the pads offer a compact all-in-one solution for live streamers. But if you want to create a new track live from loops, stems or individual song parts, things start to get difficult. Too often you have to stop or restart the performance completely in order to cut the starting point during (re-)sampling or spontaneously set hot cues or to get the individual loops back in sync. And at least a simple sequencer wouldn't have hurt.

KAOSS Replay is currently worth recommending, especially as a creative hardware FX with playback functions in a housing suitable for live use, although the price of just over 1.000 Euro is currently too high.

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Test: Qu-Bit Mojave

The American company, Qu-Bit, is known for its modern and innovative digital products. Qu-Bit Mojave is a special granular multifunctional module that Qu-Bit founder Andrew Ikenberry created and named after the sandstorms and natural phenomena of the Mojave Desert! by Heiner Kruse

Features

- Voltage-controlled noise oscillator
- Four differently colored, simultaneously usable noise outputs
- Output for random gates
- Pitched noise via controller or CV control
- Synchronizable using the clock input
- HP:6, U:3, depth:30mm
- Power consumption +12V: 49mA
- Current consumption -12V: 39mA

Facts

Manufacturer: Qu-Bit
Web: qubitelectronix.com
Distribution: Retailer
Price: 449 Euro

- ▲ Modern, multi-variant granular effect
- ▲ Numerous effect variation options
- ▲ Internal microphone
- ▲ Up to 150 sec audio buffer
- ▲ USB stick slot for setting updates
- ▲ Integrated reverb and feedback options

Sound:
Operation:
Price/Perf:
Rating:

Alternatives

After Later Audio Monsoon
258 Euro
afterlateraudio.com

Instruo Arbhar
658 Euro
instruomodular.com

BU: Qu-Bit Mojave is a very versatile module for editing audio material with granular synthesis.

Qu-Bit Mojave is a versatile granular effect equipped with an internal microphone. It's all about small audio particles, the grains, which can be transformed into audio particle storms in real time and in many different ways.

Despite its compact size, Mojave is one of the most complex modules I have ever tested. You first have to understand what the eleven controls, six buttons and the colorful illuminated fields and graphics are for. Ideally, when the module is switched on and the output is wired, an interesting sound is immediately created because the sounds coming in via the internal microphone are then automatically transformed into granular experiments (beware of feedback). Arpeggio-like results or chords in response to a continuous tone introduced via the audio ins are also possible.

Once you have a better understanding of the module, you can work in a similar way to other granular tools such as Clouds & Clones, but there are more options in Mojave. The four small controls at the bottom are, unfortunately, not labeled; they are controls (1) for the Dry/Wet component, (2) for the zone or read-out position of the Audio Buffer, (3) for the Playback Speed and Pitch of the grains and (4) for the Envelope applied to Granular Playback, which makes transitions between grains smooth or abrupt and shapes the sound character. Soft sound clouds, wild particle storms or short, twitching pulses are equally possible, but the result depends on other settings; particularly, the once again small Size control at the top right, which controls the Grain Size.

The „Rate" (regulates the speed of grain generation), „Drift" and „Whirl" (random changes in the readout or panning position) are also important and, ultimately, familiar parameters. Grains are created in time with an external or internal clock, but you also have the option of using the crossing of an audio threshold, pressing the „Gen" button or using a gate input signal to trigger the particles - that's quite special.

„Distribute" and „Structure" control rhythmic and tonal components on a random basis and control intensities. „Distribute" is responsible for changing rhythmic patterns, „Structure" takes over the detuning of the grains based on a scale set in „Sky Mode" (major, minor, quantization-free or configurable via software, see below). The „Gust" control affects effect processing at the end of the signal flow.

The signal can reverberate or be routed into a feedback loop. If you then turn up „Drift", „Distribute" or „Structure", strongly varying sounds are sent into the feedback loop, which can actually quickly create something like a storm of sound particles that keeps changing and slowly fades out when you turn down crucial parameters such as „Gust".

Freeze & Lock

In contrast to the „Lock" function, which freezes the input buffer, the „Freeze" button preserves the granular final result. Both functions indicate their activation with white lighting and are particularly suitable, in practice, for interventions during a performance in order to temporarily save results - or to switch to something new. With all its knobs and buttons, Mojave aims to be a performance tool above all else. You will also find a total of 15 CV inputs for parameter control.

In addition to the L/R in and outs for stereo signal processing, there is also a configurable modulation CV out called „Dune". Using the USB-A connection at the front, you can load settings with an integrated and removable stick and even supply smaller devices with power. A configuration with reverb settings, scales or the length of the audio buffer (a buffer size of up to 150 seconds is possible) can be defined in the web-based Narwhal app and loaded as an options. json file. Updates are even possible during operation.

Verdict

Mojave is a modern granular effect with lots of extras. It takes a little getting used to, but the result is that you can use this module to create particularly varied granular effects and use it as a live performance tool with the integration of outside noises on location.

Demo video

Test: Hexinverter VCNO

When the Canadian company, Hexinverter Électronique, ceased production in 2023, Erica Synths took over the redesign, manufacture, distribution and support of several modules from Hexinverter's portfolio. Among them is today's test candidate VCNO - a noise oscillator with some special features. In the following, we will shed light on whether this reissue is musically worthwhile. So: Bring the noise! by Daniel Bock

Noise plays an important role in many musical applications. It is an important component when building percussion, creating atmosphere, roughing up oscillators or for random-based modulation. A noise source is often found in utility modules, just like with Sample & Hold functions. Noise is also easily accessible externally. Who hasn't dragged a radio through the system before? But is it worth buying a specially designed module?

Panel and mode of operation

The black panel is clearly laid out. Two controls, a toggle switch, a mini-pot, five outputs and two inputs. There is also a jumper on the back of the module for setting the response of the Pitch Input. This reacts logarithmically by default, but can be switched to linear operation. The VCNO generates white noise differently than most other noise generators. It uses a Linear Feedback Shift Register (LFSR) to generate bit sequences, which are ultimately square waves. When played in quick succession, these are perceived as white noise. The pitch control slows down the sequence and, as a result, changes the sound, providing a wide range of noisy sounds. The various signals are available simultaneously at the five outputs.

Sound of white noise – four noise variants

The noise output provides the basic signal of the LFSR. Everything from sporadic squarewave sizzling, Bunsen burners or jets to the sound of water can be generated here. The screech output provides a basic signal supplemented by overtones. Tonal, vocal, screaming, sometimes demonic material can be tapped here. One successful change made by Erica

The user interface of the VCNO is kept simple and accessible.

Synth's revision of the design is the relocation of the toggle switch for selecting the pitch range of the screech-out to the front of the module. This allows you to choose between three voltages on the fly. The sizzle output has its own control. Turned to the right, you get the same signal as at the noise out. The further you turn the control to the left, the more square waves are removed from the signal. Tear provides another variant of the signal. The latter two outputs can be used to create sounds reminiscent of crunchy vinyl or popcorn. Overall, the lower frequency range of the VCNO, in particular, produces retro computer vibes. Gate contains the output signal without the negative signal components. Random gate sequences are the result. If you want to synchronize these gates with the rest of your patch, use the clock input. However, this disables the internal frequency generator, which means that the pitch control no longer has any function. The rate of the clock is then too low to generate usable noise. This means, for example, that you cannot trigger hats generated with the VCNO with your own random gates. This is probably the design specification, but in this case it makes the noise outs virtually useless. So it's either noise or random gates - both don't work at the same time in a meaningful way. What a pity!

Verdict

The VCNO offers a wide range of noise signals on little HP. The pitch modulation via CV, the sizzle control and the relocation of the screech switch to the front panel also contribute to the variability of the sounds and spontaneous influence. The VCNO is the right partner for use as an Atmosphere generator, oscillator booster or basis for all kinds of lively percussion. However, it is not suitable for me as a modulation source. This is due to the alternative design and the use of an LFSR. If, for example, you want to use a Sample & Hold to pick up values from a square wave-based noise, you will inevitably only get two different ones. This module cannot, therefore, deliver typical stepped modulations or random melodies in combination with Sample & Hold. Although other modulation applications are, of course, possible, you should be aware of this, as this is what you would normally expect from a noise source.

Demo video

Features

- Voltage-controlled noise oscillator
- Four differently colored, simultaneously usable noise outputs
- Output for random gates
- Pitched noise via controller or CV control
- Synchronizable via clock input

Facts

Manuf: Erica Synths
Web: ericasynths.lv
Distrib: Website
Price: 195 Euro

- ▲ Simultaneous use of all four noise sources
- ▲ A wide range of intoxicating sounds
- ▲ Influencing the sound via pitch CV
- ▲ Successful redesign
- ▼ Can only be used as a modulation source to a limited extent

Sounds:
Uses:
Price/Perf:
Rating:

Alternatives

Erica Synths – Pico Noise
115 Euro
ericasynths.lv

Steady State Fate – Quantum Rainbow 2
180 Euro
steadystatefate.com

Befaco – Noise Plethora
344 Euro
befaco.org

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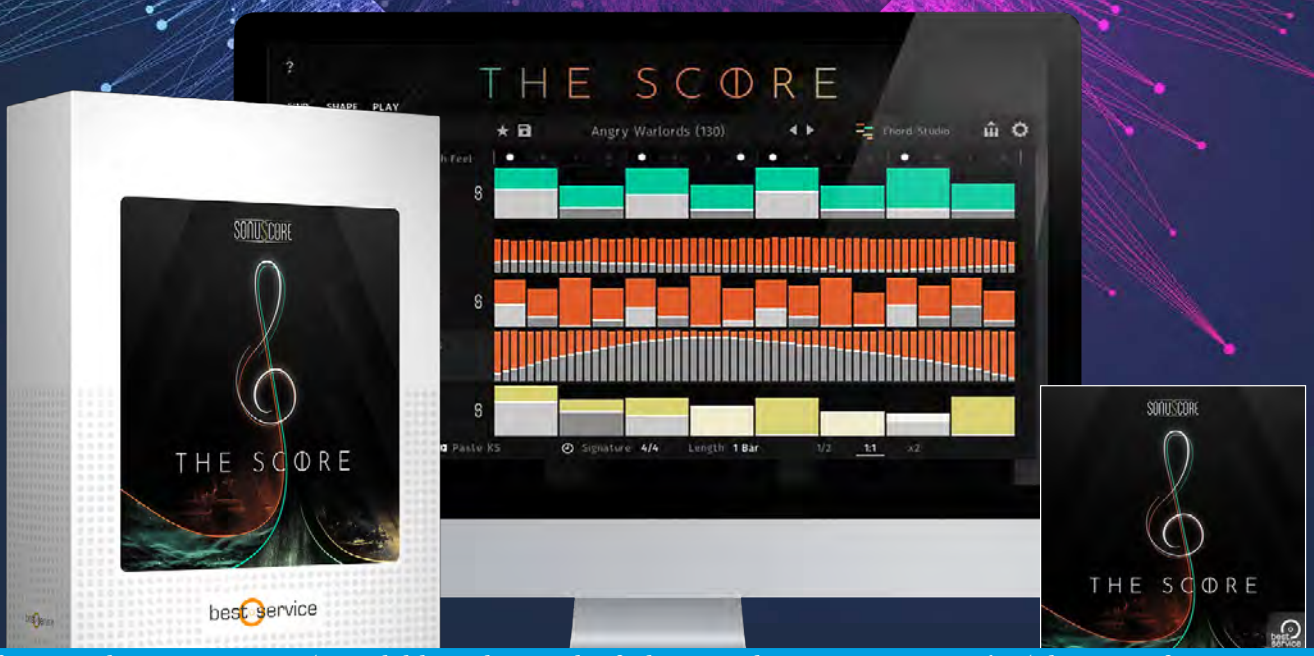

Unfortunately, your Muse isn't available at the touch of a button – but inspiration is! That's because, from now on, in cooperation with the **EMS – Electronic Music School**, we'll provide you with fresh song ideas, track templates, samples and MIDI files. every month as a creative injection that should give you new ideas. This will inject a breath of fresh air into your routine and allow you to explore completely new musical paths. Whether you're a fresh Beatmaker or an experience sound designer, you'll what you're looking for here! by Jeyênne

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THE AUTHOR

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How it works

Windows 11 on the Mac

If you need to use a Windows program as a Mac user or want to acquire the necessary Windows skills, you don't have to put another computer on your desk. Install a virtual Windows PC on your Mac. We'll show you how.

by Uwe Albrecht

With your new Mac and macOS, you are essentially perfectly happy and won't miss your Windows PC at all. However, an app that you absolutely need for work or training is, unfortunately, only available in a version for Windows and not for macOS. Has your search for a corresponding counterpart for macOS been unsuccessful? Or are you starting a new job where you suddenly have to cope with a Windows PC?

In these cases, you should neither despair nor buy a Windows PC. You can be helped by installing Windows 11 on your Mac. You may now be wondering whether this is so easy, as you are no longer using a Mac with an Intel processor, but one with an M1 or M2 processor. In this case, it is actually no longer possible to install Windows alongside macOS in another partition and start the Mac with it. The „Boot Camp" software required for this is no longer available for the current models with M1 or M2 processors from Apple, and there are no plans to make this available in the near future.

» Microsoft now officially allows the virtualization of Windows 11 (ARM) on the Mac. «

Emulate or virtualize?

A little „trick" is required to run a third-party operating system on your Mac. You have the choice of „emulating" or „virtualizing" it using an appropriate application. With emulation, the hardware of the guest system is completely replicated in software. However, this slows down the execution speed of the guest system and its apps considerably, as this requires a lot of computing time.

Using emulation software, however, almost any operating system can be used on the Mac, whether it's Mac OS 9, Solaris, OS/2 or Windows 95 - with a considerable loss of speed. This applies primarily to modern and performance-hungry operating systems such as Windows 10 or Windows 11 for the x86 architecture, if these are to run on a Mac with an M1 or M2 processor.

Kontrollcenter
Parallels
Parallels® Desktop 18 für Mac
Pro Edition
Version 18.3.1 (53614)
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Parallels Desktop 18 is the best-known virtualization software for Macs, including M1 and M2 Macs.

However, if it's an operating system that was developed for the same architecture - in our case for the ARM architecture - the situation is different. Virtualization of the guest system is possible here. In contrast to emulation, the guest system and its apps directly access certain components of the host system - usually the main processor(s). As a result, the program code of the guest system is executed directly by the main processors of the host system and not by an emulated „software processor".

This brings great speed advantages for the guest system. Nevertheless, the guest system runs in a virtual machine that is separate from the host system. Direct access to other hardware components is not possible and is not intended. This is the sole responsibility of the virtualization software.

Windows 11 (ARM) „may" be officially virtualized

If you want to use Windows 11 and its apps on the M1 or M2 Mac and at an acceptable speed, you absolutely need Windows 11 for the ARM architecture. As some manufacturers have Windows PCs with ARM architecture in their product range, including Microsoft itself, a corresponding variant is available from Microsoft and can be purchased and installed on the Mac in a virtualization program since the beginning of the year. So far, only Parallels Desktop 18 is officially supported, but if you prefer a different virtualization program, this is also possible with restrictions and a little „tinkering". We will show you both options in the workshops.

Virtualization programs to choose from:

There are now four virtualization programs available for current Macs with ARM architecture, that is, M1 and M2 Macs, all of which have their advantages and disadvantages: The well-known Parallels Desktop 18, Vmware Fusion 13 and UTM 4, which is based on „QEMU". There is also a developer preview version of Oracle Virtualbox 7, although this is not yet fully developed. Depending on your ideas and requirements, you choose the appropriate virtualization program.

If you don't feel like tedious installation and configuration work, then we recommend the Microsoft-supported method with Parallels Desktop 18, which is, however, also more expensive. If you just want to try out how you can virtualize Windows 11 on your Mac with an M1 or M2 processor and are not afraid of „tinkering", you can also use the free UTM 4 app.

Parallels Desktop 18: Parallels Desktop is the virtualization software that is already familiar from the Intel Mac and can be used to virtualize Windows and other operating systems for the x86 architecture. Since it's now available as a universal app and also runs on the M1 or M2 Mac, it enables the virtualization of guest systems and apps for the ARM architecture - but only there.

Parallels Desktop 18 supports the familiar display modes from full screen to Coherence mode, in which Windows apps run directly on the Mac desktop. Mutual access to files and folders is also possible, including a shared clipboard. Thanks to the advantages as such and the additional optimizations made by Apple to the ARM architecture, Windows 11 and its apps run extremely smoothly under Parallels Desktop 18 - this applies not only to native Windows ARM apps (64 bit), but also to conventional x86 apps.

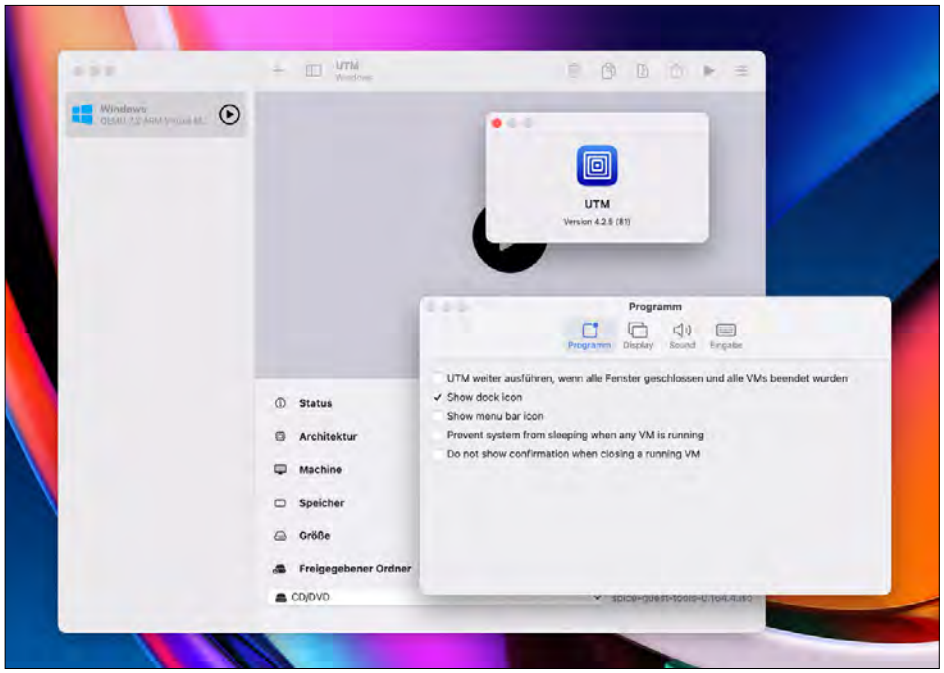
As apps for the x86 architecture are only emulated under Windows 11 (ARM), this shows the impressive performance reserves that M1 and M2 Macs have. In addition, MacBooks with M1 or M2 processors last longer - regardless of the power supply - even when Windows 11 is used on them via Pa-

ALTERNATIVE WINDOWS 365

For business users, Microsoft offers Windows 365 configured Windows PCs in the cloud that you can rent. However, starting at 30 Euro per month, this isn't exactly cheap. However, this does save you the purchase of a Windows PC or the virtualization of Windows 11 (ARM) on the M1 or M2 Mac. In addition, you generally have no problems with Windows apps not working, as they are all located on the Windows PC in the cloud. To use Windows 365, all you need is your Mac or even your iPad. Fast Internet access - preferably via fiber optics - is, of course, an advantage, as you access the Windows PC via a web browser. However, Windows 365 is not yet available for home users. It is planned that private users will soon be able to subscribe to and Windows 365 and be able to use it.

Which apps are not running?

If you use Windows 11 (ARM) in a virtual machine on the M1 or M2 Mac, you will have to do without apps that can be used via the Android subsystem of Windows 11 and via the Linux subsystem. Furthermore, you cannot run 32-bit ARM apps for Windows 11 or modern games that require Directx 12. Apps that are programmed close to the hardware can also cause problems.



With UTM 4, free virtualization software is now also available that invites you to experiment.

rallels Desktop 18. Unfortunately, however, Parallels Desktop is not cheap. Parallels Desktop 18 for home users costs just under 100 Euro. Parallels Desktop 18 Pro is only available as a subscription for just under 120 Euro per year.

UTM 4: In contrast to Parallels Desktop 18, UTM Virtual Machines 4.2.5 is available directly from the manufacturer free of charge and in the App Store for just under 9 Euro. By purchasing from the App Store, you support the developers and no longer have to worry about installing upgrades. These are displayed immediately and installed immediately depending on the settings you've made.

With UTM, you can also virtualize Windows 11 (ARM) or other operating systems for the ARM architecture on the M1 or M2 Mac. However, the app does not have the performance and wide range of functions of Parallels Desktop and is also far less convenient to use.

UTM 4 is based on the open source software, QEMU, which is mainly familiar to and popular with Linux users. QEMU supports numerous host and guest systems. Just like Parallels Desktop 18, UTM 4 also runs as a universal app on the Intel Mac. However, only operating systems for the x86 architecture can be virtualized there. The emulation of operating systems of other hardware architectures is also possible with UTM 4, although this has been associated with considerable speed losses.

Which virtualization program should I choose?

We recommend that you choose the virtualization software that you already know and of which you may have a previous version (for the Intel Mac). This means you don't have to make any changes and you may be able to purchase an inexpensive upgrade. Microsoft officially recommends Parallels Desktop 18 for virtualizing Windows 11 (ARM) on the Mac. You are definitely on the safe side with this one. If you need Windows or a Windows app, don't need it regularly or even professionally and just want to get a taste of other operating systems, and aren't afraid of a bit of tinkering, we recommend UTM 4.

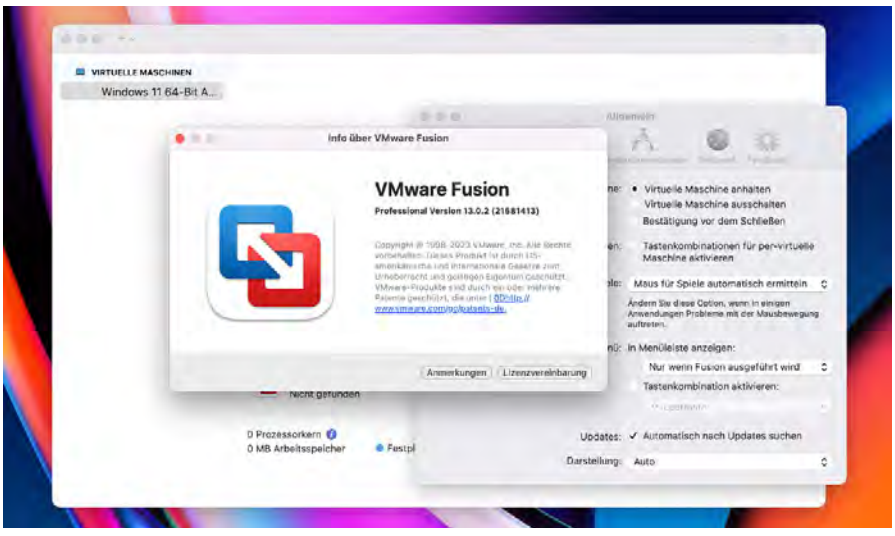
In our two workshops, we will show you how to install and set up Windows 11 (ARM) under Parallels Desktop 18 or UTM 4.

System requirements

To run Windows 11 (ARM) in a virtual machine under Parallels Desktop 18 or UTM 4, you must have a Mac with an M1 or M2 processor. This should ideally be equipped with 16 GB of main memory and an SSD with at least 512 GB of free space. Only then can you allocate enough main memory (up to 8 GB) to Windows and also reserve enough storage space on the SSD for the virtual machine. If this is not the case, you may have to reckon with a loss of performance, even when working in parallel under macOS.

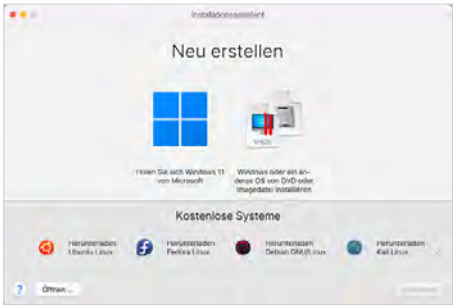
VMWARE FUSION 13

With Vmware Fusion 13, another virtualization software well-known from the Intel Mac, is now also available for the M1 and M2 Mac. This also allows the virtualization of Windows 11 (ARM) and other operating systems for the ARM architecture. It is similarly comprehensive and as powerful as Parallels Desktop 18 and supports the seamless exchange of files between host and guest systems via shared folders or the clipboard. A trial version for personal and private use is available free of charge after a comprehensive registration process. However, Vmware Fusion 13 is not yet recommended by Microsoft - like UTM 4. Creating a virtual machine is, therefore, also more complex.



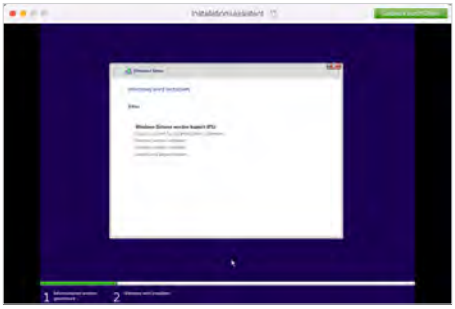
Workshop:
Install Windows 11 Pro (ARM) under Parallels Desktop 18

1 Download Parallels Desktop 18 from the Parallels website. Registration is required. The trial version can be used for 14 days.

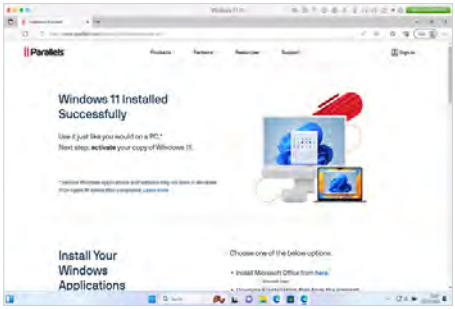


2 In the Parallels Desktop 18 installation wizard, click on „Get Windows 11 from Microsoft“ and then on „Continue“ and „Install Windows“.

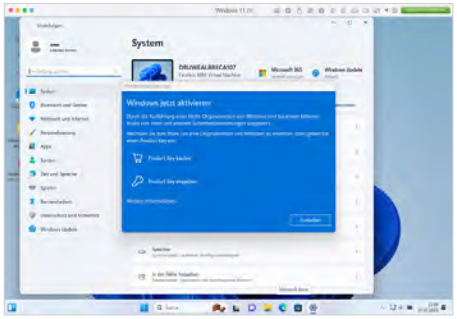
3 Windows 11 is downloaded and the installation starts automatically; however, Windows 11 must be activated later if you want to use it permanently.



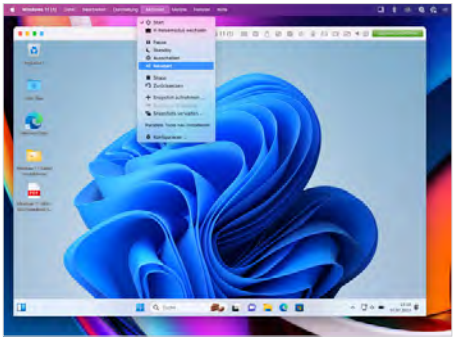
4 Necessary updates are downloaded during the initial installation. Please wait until this process is complete and Windows is ready for operation. Accept the license terms.



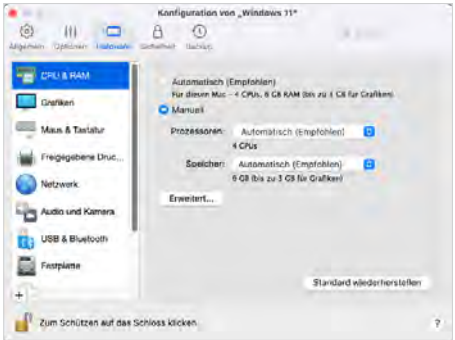
5 After installation, the „Edge“ web browser is opened in the virtual machine and the Parallels website is displayed with the message „Windows 11 installed successfully“.



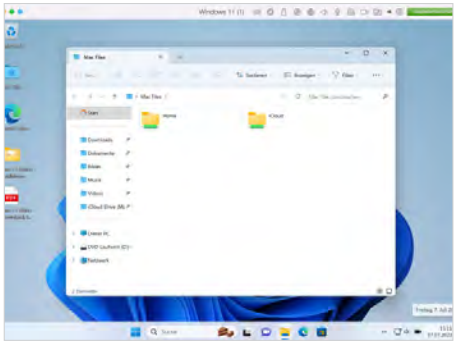
6 You will be asked to activate Windows 11 Pro. To do this, you will need a product key, which you can purchase from Microsoft for 259 Euro. If you have a product key, use it.



7 Use „Actions“ to shut down the virtual Windows PC, pause it or restart it. You can „freeze“ its status via „Take snapshot“.

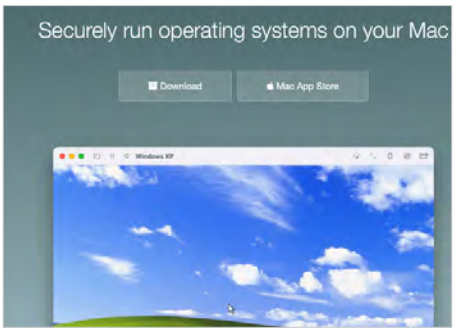


8 You can activate the Parallels Desktop views via the „View“ menu. Coherence Mode displays the Windows apps next to the macOS apps on the Mac desktop.

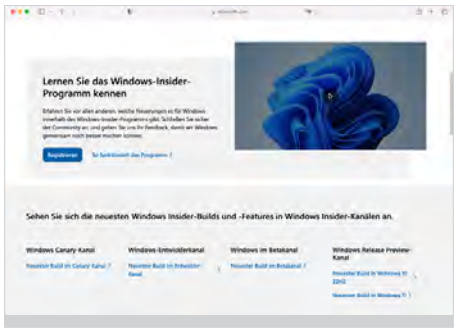


9 In the „Configure“ menu, you will find the settings for the virtual PC. You can assign it more processor cores and main memory via the „CPU & RAM“ entry. You must shut it down first.

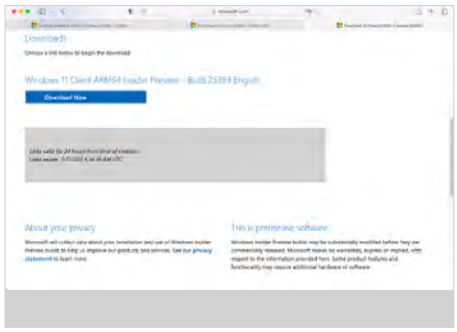
Workshop:
Install Windows 11 under UTM 4



1 Download UTM 4 from the manufacturer's website or purchase it from the App Store for just under 10 Euro. This supports its further development. Updates are also largely installed automatically.


Lernen Sie das Windows-Insider-Programm kennen
Sehen Sie sich die neuesten Windows Insider-Builds und -Features in Windows Insider-Kanälen an.

2 To be able to create a virtual machine with Windows 11 (ARM), it is necessary to download the „Windows 11 Client ARM64 Insider Preview". You will need a Microsoft user account for this.

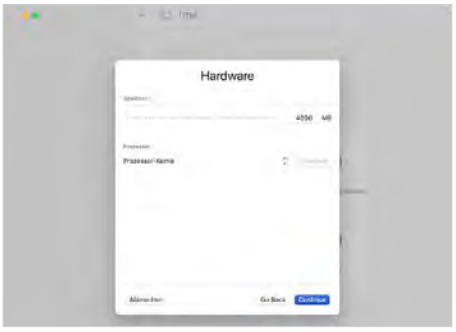


3 Go to the corresponding Microsoft website and select the „Canary" version below. This is the most stable version.

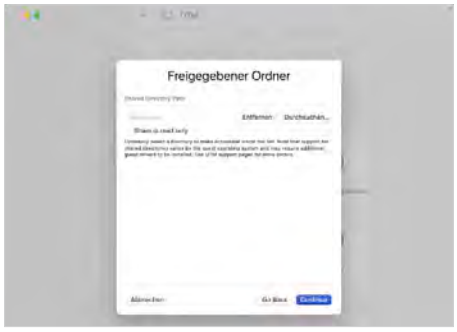
4 Start UTM and click on „Create new virtual machine" and „Virtualize". Then, select „Windows" as the guest system.

5 Select the settings „Install Windows 10 or higher" and „Install Drivers and Spice-Tools" and, of course, „Import VHDX Image".

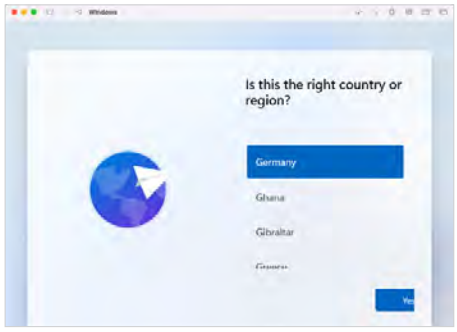
6 Use the „Browse" button to select the Windows 11 Client ARM64 Insider Preview you have just downloaded.



7 Determine the size of the main memory and the number of processor cores. You can leave the default settings as they are for now and change them later if necessary.



8 Click on „Continue" and specify a folder for data exchange (Shared folder). Save the configuration of the virtual machine in the „Summary" window.



9 The virtual machine now has been created. You'll find it on the left in the main window of UTM. Now you can boot Windows 11 (ARM) and set it up with the installation wizard.

Power Producer: Ableton Push

More live feeling with Granular III

Editing audio in real time on stage not only brings a live feel. It's also exciting for the audience to experience how your sounds are created. With the granular synthesizer, Granular III, which has been reworked in Live 12, you can record, loop and modulate short sound snippets and create pads, drones or textures from them. Find out how this works in this workshop.

by Maya C. Sternel

Project info

Material: Ableton Live 12 Suite, Ableton Push 3
Time required: 30 minutes
Content: Real-time modulation via Granular Synthesis of live recorded audio, routing setting to record audio directly into Granulator III, sound selection and modulation settings, MPE mapping for expressive playing.
Difficulty: Advanced

1 Audio presets

Load the Max for Live Instrument, Granulator III, into a new MIDI track. In Live, activate the **I/O** field in the Granulator III so that the capture parameters are displayed. If you want to use a microphone as a sound source, select the corresponding audio interface in the Live Preferences under Audio -> Audio input device.

2 Routing

In Granulator III under **Source**, select the audio source (**Ext. In** for an audio interface) and the input channel to which the microphone is connected to the right of it. Alternatively, you can also select other tracks in Live as the audio source or connect instruments to the audio interface and route them as described above.

3 Record sound

Select a recording time under Length, such as 2 sec. As soon as you click on **Capture**, the recording is stopped. This means that you must first generate a sound and then press **Capture** to record it! If you don't like the recording, repeat the process. If you click on **Cancel**, the previous sample will be loaded automatically. Click on **Save** to save.

4 Playback position

Everything else can now be set in Push. To make the sound more powerful, load a reverb with an Ambient preset, such as the **Droney Cave** preset of the Hybrid Reverb. Set **Dry/Wet** to a max. of 50%. Hold down a Push Pad and select the **Grain Size** so that you only hear one sound. Change the position to find a suitable spot.

5 Shape sound

To attenuate sharp highs, turn the filter frequency **Flt Freq** down a little. In the global submenu, you will find **Transpose** and **Detune** to adjust the sound to your scale. For more variety, set the variation parameter in the submenu of the same name to 23% and vary the position **Pos Var**, Grain Size **Grain Var** and Volume **Vol Var** a little.

6 MPE mapping

For more expressiveness, use the MPE-capable Push Pads. Select the modulation submenu. Under **Mod Dest**, select the parameter to be modulated and then make assignments. Set volume **Pres>Vol** to 60 and filter **Press>FltFreq** to 100. The harder you press a pad, the louder it sounds and the more the filter opens up.

Monthly music treasures

by Sascha Blach

Ammonite: Blueprints

Behind Ammonite is the sound researcher Amy Spencer, who presents her debut with "Blueprints". And it's an extremely interesting sound universe that the Brit creates here. In addition to electronic sound generators, the artist from London's main instrument is her voice - but not in the classic way, because she uses improvised vocals, cutting them up into tiny snippets and reassembling them in all sorts of alienated ways. Without rules and traditional structures. The voice literally becomes an instrument in itself and ensures great uniqueness. Inevitably, memories of Björk's later works always arise. However, Ammonite is even more experimental and, with a mix of Electronica, Ambient and Avant-garde, is at the same time intimate, adventurous and strange.

Genre: Electro, Avantgarde | Label: R$N Records

John Carpenter: Lost Themes 4 - Noir

This album was once again created in collaboration with Cody Carpenter (his son) and Daniel Davies (his godson). It takes the American star director and composer John Carpenter again into the world of "non-film" music. However, this non-soundtrack is inspired by the world of film, namely film noir. These are instrumental compositions that are primarily based on piano, electric guitars and synthesizers, but sometimes also contain cinematic percussions and programmed drums. In keeping with the inspiration, everything is rather dark, but also somehow timeless. A bridge from Rock music to synth wave and from there to classical film music. Okay, okay, this album is actually only "non-cinematic" because it wasn't created for a specific film. If it had been released as a soundtrack, no one would have complained.

Genre: Rock, Electro | Label: Sacred Bones

Pain: I Am

After separating from Till Lindemann, Pain mastermind Peter Tägtgren finally seemed to have time for a Pain album again. After all, eight years have passed since the last record "Coming Home". Musically, however, the Swede follows on seamlessly from his predecessor and once again offers danceable Industrial Metal that is interspersed with meter-thick synth layers. As always, it's extremely catchy and not only „Party In My Head", which has been streamed over 33 million times on Spotify alone, clearly contains the hit gene. The structures are basically quite simple and you're constantly waiting for the next big chorus. The eleven tracks were produced in typical Tägtgren style with lush guitars. His son Sebastian was also involved again as a drummer and wrote two songs, "Revolution" and "Don't Wake The Dead," which fit seamlessly into the record. In short: If you like Pain, you will love the record!

Genre: Industrial Metal | Label: Nuclear Blast

Thief: Bleed, Memory

The Los Angeles-based project around mastermind Dylan Neal dedicates its fourth album to the topic of memory and associated phenomena such as memory loss and dementia. After the illness affected his father, Neal increasingly dealt with his own demons and memories and, at the end of this process, unearthed extremely ghostly music. Interesting: "Bleed, Memory" is based on sampled church music. In this process, the samples were manipulated and used as the basis for their own songs somewhere between Industrial, Electro, Trip-Hop and Synth-Wave. In the end, the church music is nothing more than a dark veil that occasionally shimmers through the dense soundscapes. Granular synthesis was also often used to create the most spooky sound possible, which was intended to appeal to fans of Nine Inch Nails, Ulver and Gary Numan, among others.

Genre: Electro, Industrial | Label: Prophecy

Frank & Tony: Ethos

Ten years after their last album "You Go Girl", the Dance duo Frank & Tony are finally back. The two gentlemen Francis Harris and Anthony Collins are once again devoting themselves to typical House sounds and trying to preserve the original legacy of the genre in the present. But even though "Ethos" repeatedly reveals dance floor qualities, the album is largely of a calmer nature and relies on large spaces, airy arrangements and subtle hypnotic beats and bass. All sorts of vocal features that the duo from Brooklyn and Biarritz recorded, for example with the singer and pianist Eliana Glass or luminaries such as DaRand Land and DJ Aakmael, are also formative. The two tracks with Eliana Glass in particular open up a whole world of sound of their own, which has nothing to do with classic club music, but spreads an exquisite magic.

Genre: Deep House | Label: Scissor And Thread

Justice: Hyperdrama

With their fourth album, Justice wanted to reinvent themselves a bit. So the French duo locked themselves in a remote Parisian house for a long time and worked on sounds that Xavier de Rosnay and Gaspard Augé found exciting and new. The result is difficult to put into words because it is an extremely versatile Electro album. Disco, Pop and Funk meet spherical soundtrack elements; besides that influences from Hardcore Techno and Gabba were also incorporated, and somehow everything results in a House-like sound that is unmistakably Justice. Various guests also contributed to the greater diversity, as collaborations can be heard for the first time in Justice's history. Artists such as Kevin Parker, Miguel, Connan Mockasin Thundercat and The Flints were involved. The duo's fourth album is also the most elusive to date.

Genre: Electro, House | Label: Ed Banger Records

The KVB: Tremors

Being undercooled and cool – is that possible at the same time? Definitely at The KVB! On their new album, the British duo brings back all sorts of memories of the 80s and thus the heyday of Post-Punk, but manages to skillfully translate this sound into the present. With drum machines, synthesizers and guitars as well as alienated, reverberated voices, Kat Day and Nicholas Wood create a sound between Synth Wave, Shoegaze, Electro and Post-Punk that seems dark and sexy, but also decidedly cold. The arrangements seem minimalist and sparse, but at the same time very atmospheric. The "Tremors" sound, which reminds of smoke machines and underground clubs, turns out to be often dreamy, but mostly danceable and sometimes energetic. Fans of The Jesus And Mary Chain, The Soft Moon or Soft Kill should give it a listen!

Genre: Post-Punk, Synth-Wave | Label: Invada Records

Vegyn: The Road To Hell Is Paved With Good Intentions

The British music producer and DJ, who became known for his work on Frank Ocean's mega-sellers „Blonde" and „Endless", is currently releasing his second album. He then presents an illustrious cast of guests such as John Glacier, Matt Maltese, Léa Sen, Lauren Auder and Ethan P. Flynn. While Vegyn originally comes from Hip-Hop, this album contains more of an eclectic mix of Electronica, RnB, Trip-Hop and Pop. Eclectic, not least because of the different singers. The focus was not on protest notes in the form of experimental songs, but on comprehensible structures and melodies with an emphasis on feeling. Nevertheless, with what he considers to be a conventional album, Vegyn is still much more avant-garde than many other artists out there. Also formative: an emotional state that Vegyn cryptically describes as "happy melancholy". Difficult to imagine? Then just listen to it!

Genre: Electro, Experimental | Label: PLZ Make It Ruins/Rough Trade

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Beat 07 | 2024
available June 7th, 2024

Feature: 99 Hit Formulas

Back in 1988, The KLF described how to hit the charts in their book „The Manual“ – even without any musical skills at all. 30 years later, the Royal Society is following in their footsteps and proving scientifically that there really are formulas for chords and melodies, that guarantee the potential for melodies to be successful. Awesome, isn‘t it? It‘s just logical that we show you how to turn these formulas into your own hits and make your life as a producer easier with templates. With and without the help of artificial intelligence, by the way!

Test: Roland SP-404MKII

In addition to a new looper and multipad export, there are new DJ effects and a sound generator for synths and basses, which is probably Roland‘s response to Korg‘s KAOSS Replay. With the 4x4+1 pads, drums, sample chops and loops can be played intuitively and combined into complete grooves. In alternative DJ mode, the SP-404MKII behaves like two digital decks, allowing you to mix, preview, synchronise and edit audio files live.

Interview: Will Gregory Moog Ensemble

Will Gregory, known from Goldfrapp, has founded a Moog Ensemble. Instead of classical instruments, this 13-piece „orchestra“ plays with Minimoog, Mellotron, Moog Voyager, Korg 700s, Prophet 6 etc. In view of the release of the album „Heat Ray“, we made an appointment with Will for an interview and are curious to hear what he has to tell us about the background of this project.

Photo: Paul Heartfield

Test: Waldorf Iridium Core

Iridium and its big brother Quantum are among the most powerful synths on the market. With Core you get flexible digital sound generation with wavetable, granular sampler & co. for well under 2,000 euros. You don‘t have to make any compromises in terms of sound, the Core version is compatible with the larger Iridium and Quantum. There are fewer controls and the touch display takes centre stage even more, but Iridium Core is more compact and mobile.

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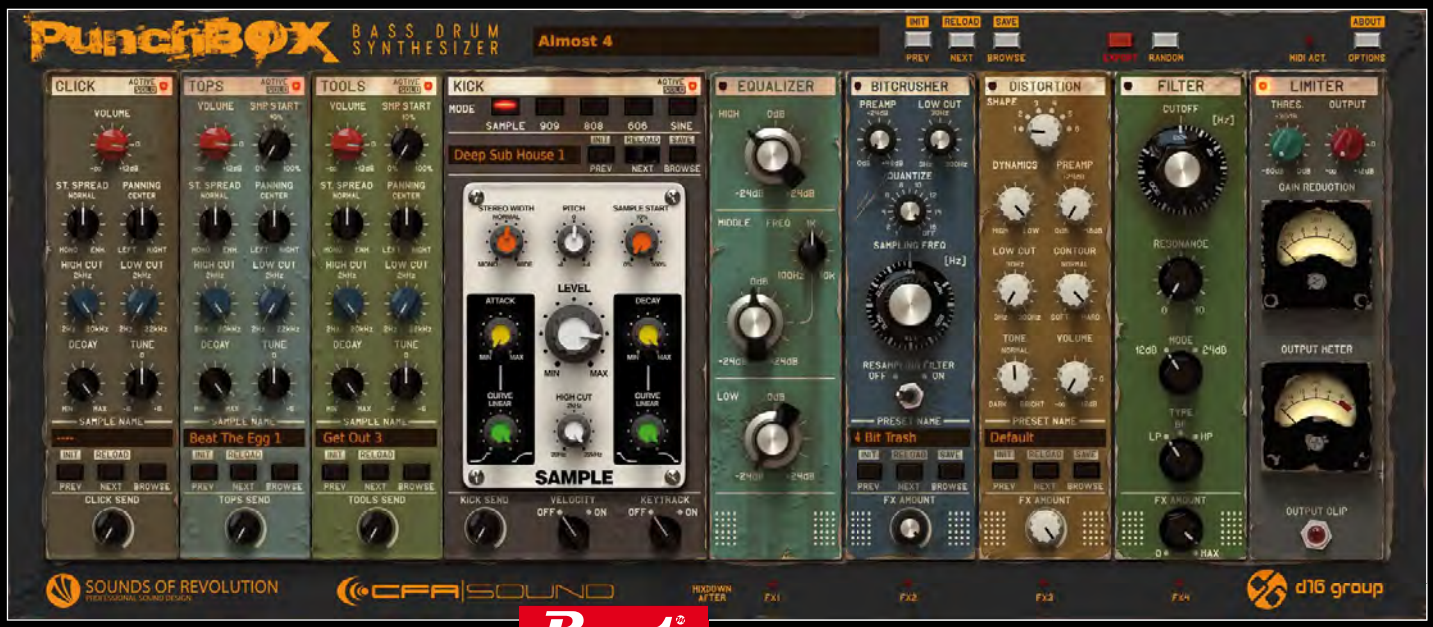

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